石踏一榮
ICHIEI ISHIBUMI
22
ハイスクール
DxD
卒業式のグレモリー
ファンタジア文庫

High School DxD

vol.22 - Gremory of the Graduation Ceremony

by Ichiei Ishibumi

Novel Updates

Translation Group:

Code-Zero

zxzxzx

Illustrations

ハイスクール
D×D
22
卒業式のグレモリー

イッセーさま。
本物のパワーによる
恐怖というものを
大会を見ている
すべての者たちの
まぶたに焼き付けますわ

Life.0

End of February———

More than twenty days had passed since the battle against Qlippoth———more specifically against Trihexa and the armies of Evil Dragons.

I, Hyoudou Issei, am currently very aroused but also very confused while being on a large bed!

“……I really want to graduate.”

The one who is looking at me with an emotional eyes and said that with a lustrous voice is———a naked Akenos-san who is on top of me!

It happened just a moment ago. When I tried to go back to my room after taking a bath found myself lured into a secret room that had the same atmosphere as that erotic room!

On top of that the one who was waiting for me inside was Akeno-san who wore a very transparent lingerie!

Apparently the Fallen Angels side, the Grigori, was impacted by the doorknob that leads the erotic room that was given to Irina from Michael-san and thus they created a new doorknob after receiving the technology from the Heavens! This room that Akeno-san and I are currently in is the door-knob type erotic room (the Grigori version)!

Akeno-san gave me such lecture as she started taking off her lingerie……!

Akeno-san who was on top of me starts to take off my clothing smoothly had an expression of some kind of determination on her face.

Akeno-san who has succeeded in stripping me of till my pants grabs my right hand and———presses it onto her breast! My five fingers which is sinking onto the incredibly soft sensation of a woman’s body is sending this sensation to my whole hand!

Akeno-san then brings her face closer to mine and then tells me with a seductive voice.

“……Please, I want to engrave you inside me……!”

Akeno-san who is on top of me gradually leans her body onto my body.

……The two enormous breast touches me with its soft sensation which expands its masses as the gravity pulls her down!

Her face approaches mine even more and exactly when our lips is about overlap each other.

“I’ve found you.”

A sudden voice! When I look that way I saw Rias who is inside this erotic room without myself noticing her presence!

Rias looks this way with her eyes half opened!

“Oh my, looks like we were caught.”

Akeno-san distances herself from me for a moment and said that while putting on a cheeky look.

“You shouldn’t underestimate my instinct.”

Looks like she found me by reading Akeno-san’s movement.

“Akeno, what on earth are you trying to————”

The action Akeno-san takes just before Rias is about to finish her sentence is————. Akeno-san’s soft lips overlaps on top of my lips.

A kiss with Akeno-san————. And she done it right in front of Rias!

My mouth was a bit opened since this kiss came from nowhere. And since Akeno-san kissed me when I was in such state her tongue easily came inside my mouth. Akeno-san’s tongue and my tongues wraps around each other. My brain starts to melt at Akeno-san’s bold and aggressive technique with her tongue.

A minutes after our passionate kiss. Akeno-san takes her lips away from me while leaving a string of saliva connected between our tongues.

……

……My brain is about to burst at the sudden passionate deep kiss we just had.

Akeno-san then tells Rias.

“————It’s a special graduation ceremony for myself.”

Rias who hears say that starts to make an adorable face and get enraged!

Are Rias and Akeno-san competing for a different kind of graduation ceremony who are also close at graduating from Kuou academy!?

Rias looks at me whose brain was totally toasted. She walks towards the bed I am on silently while making noise as she approached. She then grabbed my head tightly with both her hands.

When I thought she came closer to me————I found my lips overlapping with Rias's lips this time!

T-This time I'm doing a deep kiss with Rias!

Our tongues starts to tangle each other where it was more darling and passionate then the one I had with Akeno-san just before! One minute easily passed during our kiss! My head is about to blow at this sudden kiss! I first had Akeno-san put her tongue inside me, and now this time I'm having a deep kiss with Rias……!

Rias takes her head away from me and then mutters.

"……I guess I have washed over the kiss you had with Akeno just now with this? I cannot afford to lose!"

Rias who just said that starts to strip her clothing! She takes off her bra so daringly where her incredible breast was bouncing forward!

Rias takes my right hand! Shen presses it onto her breast! The ultimate softness like that of an unbreakable pudding!

Akeno-san acts as if she won't lose this battle against Rias so she takes my left hand instead and she obviously presses it onto her own breast! The incredible feeling of both softness and smoothness is being sent from my left hand to my brain!

Lately there has only been intense battles so I feel a sense of nostalgic at this erotic situation! Because of that it feels like my brain is melting down much quickly than ever before!

Rias. And Akeno-san. Both of them brings their face closer to mine with such emotional eyes.

“……To become Ise’s first woman……”

“……No, that is one thing I can’t give up on. Now, Ise, come at me first……”

I’m getting pushed down by the two of theeeeeem!! There is no escape for me!

T-This may be the greatest battle bestowed to me……!

I never would have imagined that I would have to handle the two of them at once……but maybe this is something which is sought from someone aiming to become a Harem King!?

Nevermind! Since I came this far I shouldn’t resist this flow and simply be determined to do it……! No, maybe I need to talk it out with these two first……! But the softness of the womanly body of both Rias and Akeno-san was so deadly that it was tainting my brain……!

I already found myself starting to feel comfortable in going with this flow……but there were those who entered this room.

“Ise-sama! Ise-sama, I have a big news for you!”

It’s Ravel! Maybe she came here by coincidence or maybe she found this place on her own.

Ravel then confirms me.

“So you were here……ah! I-It seems like I have interrupted what you were doing……!”

She goes all red at seeing the situation we were in. I got myself seen by my manager at this situation which was so hard to explain to her!

But there are more intruders!

Xenovia, Irina, and Asia also came into this erotic room (Grigori version)!

This is what Xenovia and Irina says soon as they entered.

“I knew this room would turn out to be like this! I did receive information about how the former Vice-president Akeno got her hand on the rumoured doorknob from the Grigori! Ku! I also want for myself as well!”

“Geez! This was something I got from Michael-sama but I never imagined a similar tool would be developed so soon!”

Asia then says it as she looks around the room.

“I guess for the girls living in this house the time has come for each girl to receive this room!”

Akeno-san makes a small sight and makes a bitter smile as more girls starts to enter this room.

“……I assume I would need a lock for this room in the future.”

Rias also distances herself from me as if it has ended.

“……No, the girls in this house would use any methods to unlock it. I guess each of us would need one like Asia said……”

Seriously!? So a time will come where each girl will receive this room!? I feel both happy but also uneasy since I don’t know when the girls will drag me into their room!

————Am I going to lose a private time for myself like this from now!?

Rias then asks Ravel while leaving me behind who was feeling distressed.

“So then, Ravel. What was the reason for you to panic so much and come here……?”

Ravel who was shocked at the second coming of the erotic room starts to remember her reason for being here at Rias’s words.

“Oh yes, that’s right! T-Take a look at this!”

Ravel brings out her tablet.

“It will shock you.”

“This is big news!”

Xenovia and Irina both seems excited.

There is a video on the tablet held by Ravel. I’m guessing it’s a television, a news to be more precise, of the Underworld judging from the use of the Devil’s symbols.

———More importantly, this symbol on the video……is describing something very incredible!

This is what the newscaster on the video is saying.

[————And so, regarding the Rating Game World Tournament which had finally been announced. It appears the discussion with each of the mythological forces has been settled and we received report that the preparations for the preliminary tournaments are already underway in various locations. With this, the hypothesis of the teams that would pass the preliminaries would be————]

This is what is written on the large subtitle of the news video.

———[All the forces takes action! Rating Game World Tournament finally announced!]

And the content of what the newscaster was speaking was about the Rating Game and it even is broadcasting about the tournament!

“…….R-Ravel, this is……!”

The erotic feeling I had just before was blown away at this incredible revelation so I ask Ravel’s opinion.

Ravel then says it straightforward.

“———Ise-sama. There was an emergency conference held by the leaders of each forces just before. This year there will be a Rating Game World Tournament which has all the forces participating!”

———Rating Game World Tournament……!

The whole world……the whole forces……the Rating Game!? I-I certainly do remember how the higher-ups including Azazel-sensei was saying how fun it would be to do this in the future……!

Rias has her eyes glued to the video and then narrows her eyes.

“……I see. So they bring this up at a time like this…… Did they fulfill Azazel and Onii-sama’s wishes……? No, was this the intent of Ajuka-sama and other VIPs……”

Rias starts to mumble on her own. It seems like she needs to think deeply about something.

Rias then says it after kissing my cheek.

“Ise, unfortunately we will have to continue what we were doing next time. Akeno, we will go to the Underworld first to confirm the current situation we are in. Follow me.”

“Yes, understood. Ufufu, it’s such a shame we had to end like this.”

Saying that, Akeno-san also kisses my cheek and changes back to her “Queen” mode and follows after Rias.

Rias and Akeno-san leaves the erotic room soon as they put on their clothes.

“Looks like we will be having a noisy Spring.”

The last and the biggest event of my high school life is about to begin for me who will become a third year student soon———

Life.1 Those of us that were left behind!

From the end of February to the early March. What awaits high school students during these time is———the end of semester test.

I am lying dead on my table after completing all of my test.

“Ah, the end of semester test is finally over…..”

I don’t have the energy to think after using my brain beyond its limit…… Since the beginning of this year, no, ever since last year we had been fighting against the Qlippoth which was led by Rizevim all the time. So doing these sorts of tests which you have to do at certain times actually drains out my energy more than necessary.

……Those monsters didn’t give us the leisure to let us study under peaceful times at all.

Then the Church-trio approaches my desk. Asia then says.

“We sure did fall behind in our studies due to many things that happened to us.”

“We had to continue with our school life while fulfilling our duties. You sure did overwork yourself.”

Irina says that to me while massaging my shoulders.

“I’m having fun though. Both of them is worth doing.”

The one who answers her in such energetic manner is Xenovia.

Irina takes a sigh after taking a look at Xenovia who is in high spirits.

“I am also having fun but you have too much energy in you.”

“Fufufu, I am the school president after all. I won’t be able to do anything if there was no energy in me.”

Xenovia answers in such manner. She sure did become more energetic ever since she became the school president.

———Then the usual two dudes appears within my sight.

“Oh, Ise! How was the test?”

“Don’t tell me you put a perverted answers when answering the questions?”

It was the two perverted duo, the glasses and the baldy.

“Oh, Matsuda and Motohama. How did you guys go?”

When I asked they put on a meaningful smirk.

“Fufufu, did you know we may actually do well this time?”

“Well, we did much as we can after all.”

They usually cry in agony after the test. Though this time they have quite the confidence.

However, the smile they had just a moment ago changes into a flow of tears! Then Motohama and Matsuda speaks!

“I ended up studying alone with Matsuda of all people because you ignored us every time we called you to study with us! ……Thanks to that we ended up actually learning damn it!”

“I so wanted to study at your place Ise so we could study together with Asia-chan and other girls aaagh!”

T-That’s what happened huh. So they studied together.

I do remember seeing their names appear on the missed call list on my mobile phone. Though I also had intense battles and so many shocking things happened so I didn’t have the leisure to be concerned about these two.

They start to make complaints while making tears of blood.

“There is Rias-senpai and Himejima-senpai who are the Two Great Onee-sama of our academy as well as the Three Beauties of our class consisted of Asia-chan, Xenovia-chan, and Irina-chan that are all living in your house! On top of that Toujou Koneko-chan and Ravel Phoenix-chan who are the most popular girls in the first years are also living in your house!”

“Even the beautiful teacher from the Northern Europe, Rossweisse-chan, is also home staying at your place! Your place is obviously the best as well as the greatest location to open up a study session, god dammit!”

These guys only have dirty thoughts! Damn you guys! There’s no way I’ll let you study together with Rias and Asia! The only one who can look at the girls that are home staying at my place with dirty gaze is only me! This is a privilege only given to me!

Though it seems like their learning went smoothly thanks to their wish not being fulfilled……!

I inhaled some air and then say this to them.

“……Well, a lot happened to me as well. Y-You know a lot happened because there are many girls from oversea who are staying at my place. I apologise for not answering your calls.”

It is true the girls at my place were having rough times and it is also true that I was so busy I couldn’t answer their calls. I am not lying!

Then the girl with the glasses appear as the sunlight shines onto her glasses.

“Ah, the unpopular guy and the even more unpopular guy of the Three Idiots are causing noises. Don’t spread your unpopular bacteria to us.”

Motohama and Matsuda who heard her say that bites into her words.

“Curse you, Kiryuu! You called us the unpopular guy and the even more unpopular guy!?”

“Who is which one!? You need to make that part very cleaaaaaar!”

The desperate cries of these two lads. Though Kiryuu ignored their words easily like usual……

Then Motohama changes the topic and says this.

“But you know, it sure was a shock. ———About Azazel-sensei that is.”

……

……Me and the ORC girls became silent.

Matsuda continues.

“Ah, that’s true! I never imagined that he would go back to his country without saying anything.”

Motohama continues after him.

“Those students who adored him seemed like they couldn’t hide their shock. Azazel-sensei’s lesson was really popular after all.”

……Azazel-sensei who was the teacher at this academy quit due to a certain circumstance. That’s what is told to them.

Matsuda asks.

“Ise, you guys know something about this right? He was the supervisor of ORC.”

“Ah, yeah…… Something happened to his family back in his country. We are……also shocked.”

That’s the only answer I have at his question.

……Yeah, Azazel-sensei……is no longer here. ……He isn’t dead but he went to a place where we can’t reach now.

It appears like the Church-trio are also in deep thought. So they also have a gloomy expression.

“……”

“……”

“.....”

Kiryuu who is aware of our identity knows the real circumstance of this issue so she works hard by changing the mood.

“Now, now, all of you. Don’t put on such sad faces. It’s not like we aren’t going to see him ever again, is it? Then I am sure we will be seeing him in the future. You know how that teacher is like. Maybe he will just settle the issue he has and we might see him when we are walking down the street.”

“Y-Yeah, you are right.”

I also try my best to put on a smile.

……Everyone has been acting like this ever since Sensei left. Rias, Akeno-san, the first year members, and Rossweisse-san has been putting on a sad expression at times.

To tell the truth I still can’t believe this has happened. I can’t help but think he left for his usual long visit and still think he will pop up from nowhere by saying “Yo! I’m back!” to us.

But this is something which will happen in the future after an eternity-like wait.

……I do understand the reason and the circumstance for his disappearance.

———But Sensei. We can’t help but feel lonely……

On top of the Rating Game World Tournament, I heard there is also my promotion to a High-class Devil……and combining it with Sensei’s disappearance……

If I have to say my true feeling then I will have to confess that I am feeling unsettled———

Thus the test week ended and the new Occult Research Club resumes its club activity.

We are currently preparing for the new semester at the clubroom. We, the new ORC members, are checking the schedules as we surround the table.

Kiba then hands the documents to Asia.

“Asia-buchou, these are the program for the new semester.”

Asia who is looking through the documents as she sits on the club president’s seat.

“Thank you. The preparation for the start of our new school year and the experience session for the new students joining this school. We really do have a lot of events happening at the start of the new school year as I imagined.”

She’s right. Approximately in one month time it will be the new semester and we will all be going up a year level. On top of that the new first year students will be enrolling in this academy so we need to start the school events back from the start again.

Asia says it emotionally as if she was looking back at her experience.

“We are finally going to be a third-year student. Many things happened in this one year but it feels as though the time went past so quickly……”

Yeah, time sure flies.

It’s almost a year since I became a Devil. I reincarnated into a Devil on April last year……

I can then hear the conversation of the first year trios.

“……We are almost going to become a second year students. We are going to have juniors from next month, Gya-kun.”

“I-It will be fine Koneko-chan! Even I should be able to act like their senior!”

Gasper who is now able to appear in front of people did show some improvements in his growth but I still don’t know whether he is able to act like a senior to those younger than him. I sure do hope you can show them that you are their senior, Gya-suke.

“We do have to advertise in gathering members just in case next month.”

Ravel says that as she stores away the documents.

That’s right. That’s also an important duty we need to do for restarting the club. However, gathering new members that are ordinary folks for the ORC which has special circumstance behind it is……quite hard. Except, it seems like we still need to recruit people just in case since that’s also part of the school curriculum for clubs.

……I really need to ask Kiba afterwards in details about how they were recruiting new members last year.

Then Kiba says.

“The people that are affiliated with us and are joining this academy are Le Fay-san, Kunou-san, and Tosuka. The former student president Sona……no, it’s probably better for me to

start calling her Sona-sama. Anyway, from the Sitri-side there will be Bennia-san that will be enrolling here.”

We actually have quite the number of people affiliated with us that are joining here. Furthermore, Le Fay and Bennia wants to join this club. Kunou also seems like she will be coming here after school when grade school finishes.

Though the one who I’m most surprised with among those transferring here is————

“I see, so Tosuka-san decided to enroll here.”

Kiba acts kind of shy when I ask him.

“Though she will be enrolling in middle school. I am sure she will be coming here after school so I hope everyone here can get along with her.”

Even she decided to transfer! Not much days have passed since she started living in Japan. But apparently she stated that she wishes to attend normal school just like Kiba. There was no way Rias wouldn’t allow this so Tosuka-san’s transfer to this school was decided right away on the spot.

I am sure she may find a bit of difficulties in going to her first ever school in a country she hasn’t been used to yet————

“Then we will all support her.”

Everyone nods at my opinion. No, even if I didn’t say that everyone here will help Tosuka-san on their own anyway. After all, this is the place where those from all sorts of forces gathers as one and live friendly together.

Then Xenovia speaks as if something came to her mind after listening to Kiba.

“……I guess we should also be concerned about how we address our seniors. Rias……-sama? I’m sure Asia will call her “Onee-sama” but I’m quite concerned in how to address her in front of everyone in our group. Or should I also call her “Onee-sama”……?”

Rias, Akeno-san, and the former student president Sona will be graduating from here soon. I guess it would be weird calling them “former club president” or “former student president”…… What Xenovia is saying is very true. Right now Asia is the club president and Xenovia is the student president.

I then ask Kiba, Koneko-chan, and Gasper.

“I’m sure Kiba, Koneko-chan, and Gasper will be finding it the most difficult in what to call her from now on, right?”

The three of them are currently calling her “former club president” or sometimes “buchou” from the past experience. But they may need to rethink about what to call her from now especially after she graduates. If those who joins here hears them saying that then they would get mixed up in who is the club president or the student president.

———Then Kiba, Koneko-chan, and Gasper all turns red and then says this.

“……To tell you the truth, we have already decided on what to call her. Well, we will start using it once she graduates.”

“……Yes, we will change how we address her once she graduates. W-We will also need to discuss it with Ise-senpai afterwards.”

“T-This is a momentous decision for me~!”

Hmm, the three of them are acting so embarrassed but it seems like they know what to call Rias. Now then, looks like I need to ask them later on of what they are planning to do.

……Oh well, it’s not just about the transfer students and Rias’s graduation but the spring season is approaching soon which will bring many changes.

Those changes being a change in our life———. Obliviously the issue about myself becoming a High-class Devil and beyond that but it is also the time where we need to continue with our life while having a view of what we will be doing in the future.

I say it while looking outside through the window.

“Well, I guess we are in that time of the year…… We need to think a lot about the future. It will be college for me after graduating. Well, I guess it’s no different for all the second years here. But did all of you decide on what you will do after that? I guess I didn’t ask you guys about it much.”

Basically what they will do after graduating from college. All the members here will most likely go on to study at college but I guess I didn’t ask them much about what they will do after that.

Kiba then says.

“I am planning to save up money while helping former club-president Rias with her work.”

“Saving? Are you planning to start something?”

Kiba then makes a gesture using both his hand. A gesture where he is mixing something inside a bowl.

“Yup, I started to think it might be a good idea to open a cake shop in Kuou town. Well, since we have a long Devil life we can do anything though you would needs funds to do them.”

So he has the ambition of starting a cake shop! Yeah, Kiba being the owner of a cake shop actually might suit him. Furthermore, the cakes he makes are———

“Since the cheesecake I make is Ise-kun’s favourite it might be a good idea to make sure you can eat anytime you want to.”

That’s what Kiba says. Yeah, the cheesecakes he makes are absolutely delicious.

Kiba is quite skillful with his hand and he’s good at all sorts of cooking. So he may be able to do things besides a cake shop.

Xenovia then says.

“I……want to do a job where I would be teaching.”

So that’s your goal huh. Well, that sure is an unexpected…… actually it isn’t. She did study exceptionally a lot ever since she aimed to become the student president so the image of her being a muscle-brain actually got weaker.

“I started to think it might be a good idea to make a cram school in the human world and in the Underworld for students aiming to progress into the upper education level. Well, I don’t have a clear vison about it yet so it’s still vague.”

Xenovia starting a cram school! That’s a shocking ambition coming from her……but like Kiba said we have a long Devil

life so there’s no loss in coming with many plans. Even I can’t imagine what new ambition I will have in hundred years’ time.

Irina puts on a complicated expression and tilts her head after hearing Kiba and Xenovia share their future plan.

“Hmm, the peers around me unexpectedly has been thinking through about their career path after graduating and also their future.”

“Irina, will you be working at an industry related to the Gremory in the future……actually I guess you wouldn’t. Will it be related to the Heaven?”

I ask. The Gremory will obviously welcome us but also Irina who is our comrade with warm arms if we ask them. Though if you think logically, Irina will obviously seek for a job related to the Church.

Irina then says.

“I am planning to go to the college division of Kuou academy just in case. Though I still haven’t decided on whether I will be working at a place which is affiliated with the Church even more or do something else. I am allowed to do anything I wish as long as I gather at the emergency meeting. Even so, I won’t know what will happen few years in the future…… Except————”

Irina’s words suddenly stops there. Shen then continues with a small voice while feeling shy.

“……I……am thinking that it might be fun to start a bakery shop in the future.”

Wow wow! So Irina is starting a bakery shop! She did take care of that home bakery machine delicately so maybe she wanted to make a genuine bread?

Xenovia then continues.

“Yeah, I was shocked when I saw you write that on the sheet which asked us about what career path we wanted to take. You want to start a proper bakery shop, right?”

Irina nods.

“Yes. To tell you the truth I have been studying it lately. I’m learning under Rias-san and Akeno-san’s supervision. …… Please wait a bit longer for it to appear on the dining table.”

Hmm, I’m looking forward to that.

Rias and Akeno-san can bake a bread as well. The truth is we have a bakery-type oven installed back at the Hyoudou’s residence. We also have a pizza oven on the rooftop.

Xenovia then says this while putting on a provoking smile.

“By the way, Irina’s second option was ——— becoming a bride. Though she rubbed it out right away.”

Even Asia became all bright at hearing this.

“That is a wonderful dream!”

Irina grasps hold of Xenovia’s head.

“H-Hey, Xenovia! D-Don’t go around telling everyone about it!”

Everyone has smiles on their face at seeing Irina becoming all embarrassed.

Oh my. That sure is princess-like dream she has there. Or should I say a dream a girl would have? It sure is assuring to hear such a dream when we are talking about future. Man, it really does feel as if we are living in a peaceful world again.

However, Irina sighs deeply.

“Except, starting a bakery is a bit difficult unlike becoming a bride.”

“Why’s that?”

Irina then answers me.

“I guess it’s because the condition of the Heaven is unstable right now. The higher-ups seem like they want to fill the Seraphs and higher-up’s seats in the future. So it seems like they will be asking powerful reincarnated Angels for those roles too. This is what my papa told me. He said that there’s plenty of chance for them to ask me in the future who is fighting on this land. If that happens I won’t have the time to start a bakery. For the Heaven. For the Church. And for our followers. I may have to give all my effort for fulfilling my duty then. It really is an honorable position but it will come with obligation.”

[……]

Everyone puts on a serious face at Irina’s words.

……Yeah, I did feel reassured at the peaceful talk we just had. But we haven’t fixed all of the aftermath of that battle which is now known as the War of Evil Dragons. The main forces of each factions has headed out to the very long battle against Trihexa and you could pretty much say that each force had lost that much power as well. So the matter becomes serious from here. Even the Heaven lost several

Seraphs which were their core members and many Angels had died in battle. So even Irina would be sought for assistance from the Heaven from now on. That battle would definitely affect our path from here no matter what.

Trihexa and the Evil Dragons that went on a rampage at the territory of each forces. They also showed up in the human's world where they destroyed several islands, armies, and great nature. The casualties the human world received wasn't severe as the damages the territories of the mythology factions. I heard that thanks to the works of God-class individuals of each forces that were giving their all in repairing and restoring of their territories the damaged territories are returning to their original state.

Though it won't be that easy in regards to the lives that were lost in that battle. The God-class that took damages are forced to spend a long time for their return. It was already bad enough by losing the leading Gods of each forces against the battle with Trihexa.

Likewise for the humans. ……I wonder just how many lives were lost because of Trihexa's attack. No, just how many humans lost their lives since Rizevim's havoc……

Though people are saying the casualties we received was much lighter than what we expected for the worse…… I, no, we attained many things by getting involved in a large-scale war for the first time but we also lost the same amount of things.

…..And the Rating Game World Tournament is about to happen under such circumstance.

From what Rias heard in the Underworld the joint top brass of the tournament organising committee are Ajuka Beelzebub-sama and ———Shiva the God of Destruction

from the Hindu mythology. This news spread like fire among each forces.

The God of Destruction who never took action no matter what chose to be part of the World Rating Game tournament organising committee was something no one would have predicted.

The tournament committee has already started gathering registration and participants.

There are obviously criticisms. To start a game. A tournament in a situation like this. There have been voices about their intentions from many parts of the world.

However there are those that had showed interest in participating right away from various parts of the world. This is what they said in the interview of the Underworld.

———This is a chance we can’t ask for more. We were given the stage where the legendary beings are allowed to clash head on officially. We do understand the criticism. But don’t you want to see it? The Angels and the Devils. Just which one is stronger? The Norse Gods and the Greek monsters. What will happen when they go head on?

This interview spread among each forces and it stimulated the curiosity and the battling spirits of many people.

The match-ups you could only imagine or dream about. It has become officially “approved” so the number of those who wants to see it are increasing.

And also one more. The winning prize. This is something unbelievable so this also brought the curiosity of the participants greatly.

Obviously the number of participants has increased after the announcement.

Even we……are burning with desire at hearing that interview. I'm sure it's the same for Vali and Sairaorg-san ———

There's a rumour that the tournament steering committee are planning to put some energy into the people by getting them heated up by showing them the matches of the upcoming tournament. I also heard that the money profited during the tournament such as ticket sales will be donated to the repair fund of all forces.

What's shocking is that the tournament fund will be coming from the pocket money of the Maou-samas, the Grigori leaders, and Shiva. I'm sure the money involved will have crazy figures but it will come from Sirzechs-sama and Azazel-sensei's inheritance (the pocket money and inheritance will obviously go to the restoration of each forces).

……To send the money gained from the tournament to the restoration funds huh. If the higher tops of the Underworld that are currently being prosecuted for their crimes were involved, then it would be totally fishy. Though I guess I can trust this one since Ajuka-sama and others are working behind the scene.

……I ended up thinking about the complicated stuff. Uggh, I sure did get a weird habit ever since I reincarnated into a Devil. I feel that I started to ponder more compared to the past.

Kiba then says it and changes the topic.

“Well, right now the main issue is Ise-kun’s future……or more like the promotion since it will also be a major event for us too.”

“You are right. Who would ever have thought that he would promote to a High-class Devil within one-year. To be expected from the man I thought highly of. It sure is.”

Xenovia continues after Kiba by saying that.

That’s right. The achievement I attained during the War of Evil Dragon——— such as beating Rizevim and defeating Apophis. Because of that the number of people that wants me to promote has increased drastically. The higher-ups of the Devils approved it and it was finally decided (the truth is there are talks about the members of our group that are Low-class Devil getting promoted to a Mid-class Devil).

There’s going to be a High-class Devil promotion ceremony for me in the Underworld and I am currently receiving words of applaud and gifts which are being sent to my house from the people with high posts.

The High-class Devil which I have been yearning for so much ———. I will be given the right to create my own group.

……

……Myself who was in high spirits by strongly shouting out my lecherous ambition. “I’m going to be a High-class Devil and create a group full of girls and become a Harem King!”. What came to my mind when I fulfilled that ambition of mine was…..happiness which also came with the realisation that you cannot attain everything with satisfaction.

……I attained many things by coming this far but it’s not like I didn’t lose much because of it. Perhaps attaining

something means losing something as well.

……Azazel-sensei, even a bit of word would had been fine. I truly wanted to get an advice from you.

————Am I allowed to become a Harem King? Am I allowed to drown in the sea of breasts?

Maybe I need to act while keeping in mind about my surroundings even more in order to become both a professional adult and Devil?

……Hey, Sensei? What would you when you see me now?

Such complicated thoughts are going through my head every day lately. And it seems like everyone knows that as well.

Perhaps Irina read my mind so she asks me while looking into my face.

“It’s been in my mind for a while but it seems like you have mixed feeling about it, don’t you?”

I say it while exaggerating my joy.

“W-Well, I am happy about it. I’m super happy and I feel honoured!”

But I tell them my true thoughts. They are my comrade after all.

“But……if it looks like I’m having mixed feeling about it from your eyes then I have to say that you are right about it. …… Too many things happened and even if I do understand that with my brain I still find a part of me inside me not accepting the past events. I have a cloudy feeling. It doesn’t

feel like it’s happening for real. It feels like I’m experiencing someone else’s life even the part which involves myself.”

Others also put on a complicated look when they listened to my words.

Asia got off from her club president’s seat to approach me and then she held my hand. She says it with a smile.

“I wouldn’t be able to solve all of Ise-san’s concerns……but I do feel honoured that Ise-san will become a High-class Devil. Therefore, I want to congratulate you from the bottom of my heart. ———Congratulation, Ise-san.”

———!

……I became so emotional at Asia’s warm and straightforward word. I hug Asia on the spot!

Ah, my Asia-chan makes me feel relieved simply by saying things like this! Yeah, a simple remark of congratulation like this unexpectedly goes into your heart smoothly.

While we are doing such, Ravel acts like a good manager and says it in a calm manner.

“However, even if it doesn’t feel like reality there will be many kind of people appearing before your eyes. You may feel the sense of being a High-class Devil from such situation. You will most likely become the most anticipated High-class Devil rookie in the whole Underworld.”

Many people will……come before me huh. ……And being anticipated huh. Though that means I will be on alerts of enemies as well……

If there are those that finds it painful in the freedom I seek for then it means there are those that won't be happy at my promotion.

Yeah, it looks like I will be having more troubles. It's nostalgic when I remember about a year ago when I was aiming to become a Harem King with simply lecherous thought. To myself a year ago: You know that you won't be going through only fun times to become a High-class Devil?

Damn! I simply want to think about breasts! I'm going to jump into Rias's breast when I get back home! No, it might be a good idea to get spoiled by Akeno-san too!

———Truly, "What does it mean to become a High-class Devil?"!

I am currently going through a lot of concern———.

It happens then. There's a sudden knock to the door. Asia answers by saying "Come in".

Who is it? When everyone looks in suspicions———the one who comes in by opening the door is one male student.

"Pardon me. Is Kaichou———oh, you are here after all."

As he says that he breathes out the air from his mouth when he finds Xenovia.

He then walks towards Xenovia while leaving sounds in his footstep.

"Xenovia-kaichou, you are here. I have completed the report from before so I want you to confirm it."

The male students who hands out the document to Xenovia. I……think I’ve seen him before. More like he’s quite known among the students.

Xenovia responds to the boy in a familiar manner.

“Ouryuu. Alright, show me.”

She calls the boy with that name and looks through the documents after receiving it.

The boy looks at all of us and looks at the whole room as if it’s a rare sight.

Xenovia realise it and then asks him.

“Oh, haven’t you introduced yourself to everyone here yet?”

The boy takes a breath again as he smiles.

“Yes, and it’s almost about a month since you told me you will introduce me to everyone, Kaichou.”

Xenovia makes a bitter smile.

“Sorry, I totally forgot.”

Xenovia makes the boy stand right next to her and introduces him to us.

“He’s the secretary of our student council who is a first year and———”

“Nakiri Kouchin Ouryuu is my name. I have heard many rumours about all of you.”

———As such, the first year student called Nakiri Kouchin Ouryuu who is the secretary of the student council

introduces himself to us.

We already knew his name when the members of the new student council were announced and I also saw this boy when Xenovia was walking through the corridor while having the new members of the student council walk behind her. The name and the face matches.

……Though there was a part of his name I didn’t know about……

“It sure is a long name.”

I couldn’t help myself but say that.

Nakiri gives me a brief explanation.

“Kouchin is my posthumous name. It’s basically like a middle name. So just Nakiri Ouryuu is fine.”

Ah, I think I heard people from old times using such name.

Ravel and Gasper who are also first year responds to Nakiri’s entrance.

“It’s rare to meet you here.”

“Hello, Nakiri-kun.”

Nakiri also responds to them by raising his hand.

“Yo, the usual trio.”

Ah, so he knows them. There’s a connection among the first years that I don’t know about.

“……Kohchin, are you working?”

Koneko-chan asks while eating the stick like sweat.

“Yeah, I have business with President. Also, please stop calling me that name with that intonation…… I hate it because it sounds like Nagoya Kohchin.”

Nakiri says it while acting a bit depressed.

……So he has the nickname called Kohchin huh. Well, it’s a bombastic name but his middle name really has a bell to it which is easy to make a nickname for him.

Asia and Irina also responds to Nakiri.

“Nakiri……wasn’t it one of the five clans?”

“It’s the leading clan, wasn’t it? On top of that his name is “Ouryuu” which is the same name is the Spiritual Beast which represents the Nakiri clan……”

Nakiri nods.

“Yes, I’m the heir of the Nakiri clan. Currently, that is. …… Well, four years ago the previous “Ouryuu” caused trouble with the Hakuryuukou and Ikuse Tobio-san……”

The heir!? T-This guy!? The heir of Nakiri clan which is the leading clan of the five clans…… Man, I did think that he has a special position among the Nakiri clan but who would have ever thought he would be the heir…… I sure do encounter many heirs of a noted family……

And did something happen to the previous “Ouryuu” four years ago? Hmm, I’m really intrigued by it. I might ask Vali next time.

Four years ago is when Vali met Tobio-san and back then I heard the Grigori as well as the groups full of special power users were in quite a mess.

Xenovia is crossing her arm and is nodding.

“Ouryuu is quite amazing. After all, he is given a special position under the Maou Ajuka Beelzebub. Wasn’t it the search for the remaining Longinus?”

———!

……This is a shocking revelation. Seriously? Searching for the remaining Longinus under Ajuka Beelzebub-sama. Is it perhaps the rumoured two types———the “Innovate Clear” and “Teleos Karma”? It caught my interest.

Then is he perhaps involved in the mobile phone “game” that’s created by Maou-sama?

Nakiri says it with a mixed look.

“……How should I put it. That person put me in charge of the complicated stuff so he assigns me with reckless tasks……”

……Looks like he went through experience which can’t be explained in one sentence.

“Oh well, ask me anything when you want to. My comrade and I will help.”

I simply told him that. I won’t feel good if someone I met gets dragged into trouble and gets hurt.

Nakiri replies honestly by saying, “Yes, when something happens in the “game”, then I will definitely contact you.”

———Then Nakiri comes and stands in front of me and then says it after fixing his posture.

“Hyoudou Issei-senpai of the Sekiryuutei.”

“Y-Yeah, what’s up?”
Nakiri suddenly bows his head to me.

“The truth is I see you as my role model. You possessed the Longinus of Welsh Dragon in you while you were just a normal high school student. But even though you were put into so many dangerous situations you overcame all of it. ———I wish to live like you by attaining a power where I can use to fight against my own destiny.”

Nakiri who stands straight again has this expression. ——— A serious expression with clear and straight eyes.

……O-Oh man, it’s embarrassing! To have him say that straight to my face! I-It sure does feel itchy to be said that from a boy younger than me!

I then say this while waving my hands.

“You are exaggerating me too much. I simply tried to cope with the unreasonable kind of situation which falls on me.”

“That’s the thing I see impressive about. Hyoudou-senpai, there’s many things I wish to learn from you. Please tell me if something happens. I shall become the support of all of you. I’m sure Ajuka-san will allow it too.”

D-Does he have some kind of weird feeling towards me? When I look at Xenovia,

“Ouryuu wanted meet you for a long time, Ise. I always forgot to when I kept on making promises to him. So he was

able to finally meet you today.”

……So he basically made an excuse of finding Xenovia to hand her the document in order to come here?

I-I’m really embarrassed. This is more nervous than to have a girl say something which gives you a heartbeat! It’s a different kind of feeling I get from Gasper who is also a male and is my junior!

“Thanks. I will definitely remember that.”

———That’s the best I could say.

Then Xenovia whispers into my ear.

(If something really happens then we should call him. Ise, Ouryuu is truly strong. He’s in a different league among those with special powers.)

(Seriously?)

He is the heir of Nakiri that is the leading clan of the Japanese special power users. It’s natural that he is strong despite his young age.

I’m also curious about Ajuka Beelzebub-sama’s “game” so maybe I should try it through Nakiri’s connection?

When I was thinking about how I should get along with my junior———there is a knock on the door again.

The one who comes in this time is a crimson-haired beauty.
———It’s Rias!

This what Rias says soon as she comes in.

“Is Ise here———? Oh, there you are.”

Rias confirms my presence.

“Hmm? You need me?”

I point at myself where Rias nods her head and then says this.

“Yes, there is a guest for you. ———Come to the Kuou town’s underground with me.”

After this I will come to experience what Ravel said before about many kinds of people appearing in front of me if I am to become a High-class Devil.

I, who left the club work to Asia and Kiba, visited one of the space which exists in the Kuou town’s underground together with Rias and Ravel.

What I saw is———a Dragon which stood ten metres high. That Dragon has an appearance which looks familiar and the aura I feel around him is also familiar.

The Dragon bows his head and is pretty much lying flat on the ground when he sees me.

“This is my first time coming before your eyes. I am the third son of the Blazing Meteor Dragon Tannin and Bova is my name.”

———!

……I am shocked at the Dragon’s words. He’s Oldman Tannin’s kid!? No wonder his appearance and aura felt similar! His appearance surely reminds me of Oldman Tannin and his aura is identical to him!

Bova who is the third son of Tannin speaks once again.

“I come here to ask you for a request, Sekiryuutei of the Blazing Truth———Hyoudou Issei-sama. ———I have come as I eagerly want you to accept me as your retainer!”

M-My retaineeeeeeeeeeeer!?

……T-This is unexpected and I also quite enjoyed how I didn’t know how t give a proper reaction to this……

Ravel who is standing next to me whispers into my ear.

(He’s a famous ruffian in the Underworld where he received a disparaging name called “Bova the Destroyer”. He’s well known for his bad attitude which makes you think he possibly couldn’t be the son of Tannin-sama when his father is respected by the Dragons.)

This time Rias whispers into my other ear.

(Except, it’s true that he’s called the strongest among Tannin-sama’s children.)

……”Bova the Destroyer”! The Underworld’s ruffian! But he’s also the strongest among Oldman Tannin’s kids!

……More like this is my first time finding out that Oldman Tannin had kids. No, it wouldn’t be strange if had kids but……the Oldman also had a wife huh. And it seems like he has many kids.

And Oldman Tannin’s third son came all the way here to Kuou town and said he wants to become my retainer.

……H-Hmm, I don’t know how to answer since this was so abrupt! Maybe I should consult with Oldman Tannin? No, it feels like this third son came here in secret and it seems like this talk will go somewhere else if I talk to his parent.

……I already had my hands full due to many things happening to me including the new semester, the new grade level, and the promotion to become a High-class Devil. I guess there will be more issues coming to me from now on which will make me have more concerns……

“Hmm, so by that you mean……you want to become my servant?”

When I ask, the Oldman’s third son become really surprised and waves his hand to reject my assumption.

“Oh no! I’m not here to ask you for such a big role! I have heard you will become a High-class Devil! And I also heard that you have the ambitions to form your group with only female servants once you get promoted! That rumour has already reached my ear so there’s no way I can allow myself to ask you for that! Except, it would be my greatest joy for you to allow me to stand beside you as your mere subordinate and as your soldier!”

He bows his head even further and he’s flat on the ground again.

……He seems like a strong Dragon and he already has an amazing status of being Oldman Tannin’s son. So it’s hard for me to react since he’s acting so stiff towards me~

The Dragon———, Bova, says further to push his request.

“Can you please allow me to stand beside you?”

This guy is also looking straight into my eyes just like Nakiri from before.

……Oh man, just look at the situation I am in. What am I supposed to do? That’s the only words coming into my head.

……I really have been saying I’m “troubled” or “oh man” since before.

“How about it, Ise?”

Rias tries to confirm with me. If he was simply my guest, then Rias who is my master would have sent him off and would have told him to come another day…… Bova came to rely on me who will become a High-class Devil. Rias asked me by understanding that.

……Not becoming my servant but my subordinate huh. Well, once you become a High-class Devil you will also have a retainer and henchmen besides your servant. Even if they aren’t a direct servant there are many workers and soldiers at the Gremory castle. And he’s saying he’s okay with being one of my soldiers.

———Not becoming my “Pawn” but simply my soldier.

“……Is it okay for me to give you my answer once I become a High-class Devil?”

That’s the best answer I can give him right now.

At the end, Bova became convinced with my words and returned home……

……From now on I will be getting more juniors at my school and once I become a High-class Devil I need to think about my other subordinates and not just my servants.

I have so much troubles going through my head and Rias says it as she smiles to me.

“Being a High-class Devil is full of concerns you know?”

She then holds me gently.

“But your senior and your manager is always besides you so you can consult us anytime, okay?”

……Yeah, she’s right. That’s absolutely right. Fortunately, I have Rias and Ravel behind me. So I don’t have to be concerned just by myself, right……?

Ravel takes my hand and smiles.

“She’s right. Ise-sama, you have been putting on a difficult expression all the time lately. Please consult us when you are concerned. I also come from a High-class Devil household you know?

Yeah, I have many comrades and High-class Devil around me.

Too many things happened which made it hard for my brain to keep up with. But I can simply ask my “seniors” when I’m in doubt.

Just a bit is fine————. I can simply take a step by step and come to understand it bit by bit.

————Azazel-sensei.

I will do my best!

————○●○————

It happens on the next weekend.

All of us living in the Hyoudou residence came to the ocean, an inhabited island. In order to do fishing that is.

“Alright! I sure am going to fish them out! Ask me anything when you need a word of advice!”

[Yeah~!]

My comrades (mainly ORC members) responds to my dad’s words.

That’s how my dad said in high spirits as he is the one who came up with idea to go fishing and the one in charge.

Yes, yesterday during dinner the fishing topic my dad started became a hot topic so we decided to go fishing immediately after listening to his passionate talk.

Everyone was eager in his plan and this event happened smoothly after many preparations.

So that’s how I ended up coming here to the beach together with everyone. By the way this inhabited island belongs to someone related to us and they say that you can catch many good fishes around here.

“……Geeze, he’s in high spirits like a child.”

I’m feeling a bit embarrassed at how my dad is behaving. Well, its normal to feel embarrassed if your dad acts like a child in front of your comrades!

“Tell me when you get hungry. I’ve prepared riceballs and snacks.”

———Mums says that as she points at the large basket. Mum setup the parasol on the beach of the inhabited island to make a base. Rias and Akeno-san are also helping her.

Yup, I can just go where mum is waiting when I want to take a small break.

Dad isn’t the only one in high spirits. There are many girls that are keen in fishing ever since we planned to do this today.

Xenovia and Irina are acting in high spirits by carrying their fishing rod from their shoulders.

“Xenovia! Let’s have a challenge to see which one of us can catch the most fish!”

“Bring it on, Irina!”

Xenovia and Irina went sprinting through the beach sand to find a fishing spot while dragging Asia with them.

“I will catch them while diving into the beach.”

Rossweisse-san headed towards the sea in her wetsuit while carrying a harpoon with her. Rossweisse-san sure does take an amusing action sometimes. Ah, but catching them while diving into the sea doesn’t seem bad either.

Besides, there are an interesting bunch of lads with us today.

“Well, I never imagined that you will be joining us today.”

The one standing in my sights are———the Vali team!

“Fu, doing things like this at times might not be a bad idea.”

Vali smirks as he prepares his fishing rod.

Dad explained about his fishing plan and invited Vali who had visited the Hyoudou residence in coincidence. Then what happened was a surprise! Vali brought Bikou and

Arthur with him where they all appeared in the Hyoudou residence this morning!

……I get confused at Vali team’s action at times. They want to go to many places. I even come to think that they are normal adventurers at times.

Right besides us are Kuroka, Koneko-chan, Ravel, Gasper, and Valerie that has formed a group and are currently finding their fishing spot.

“Shirone! Birdie-chan! Gya-kun and Valerie! Do your best! I will eat the fishes deliciously once you caught them – nyaan~”

Koneko-chan responds to Kuroka with a dumbfounded look to Kuroka who has no intention of fishing.

“……We definitely won’t give the fishes to Onee-sama.”

Ravel is spinning around the reel in excitement.

“I have never done fishing before.”

“It’s my first time too~”

“Ufufu, I will just be cheering Gasper then.”

Gasper seems to be enjoying himself and Valerie is also smiling happily while wearing a strawhat.

Valerie succeeded in retrieving all of the Holy Grails into her body. The Grigori done a checkup for her and now she’s able to walk outside normally like this.

It seems like the pendant which was made from fragment of the actual Holy Grail is continuing to give effect to the “Sephiroth Grail” which had returned to its original state.

The Grigori made the report that as long as she doesn’t extensively and overuse her ability then it won’t contaminate her mentality.

In other words Valerie can finally walk outside without any concern.

……Yeah, there were many difficulties but there were things we were able to retrieve like this. We are able to go fishing with everyone like this because I was able to take back my dad and mom back from Rizevim’s grasp.

———Then another heartwarming scenery appears within my vision,

Le Fay is acting shocked at the fishing rod.

“Onii-sama, I-I don’t think I can attach the bait onto the hook.”

“It can’t be helped then. I will do it for you afterwards. But remember that a witch shouldn’t be afraid of an insect, okay?”

Arthur responds to Le Fay as he made a brotherly smile to her who is afraid of the insect which will act as the bait.

Being able to see such thing is thanks to this excursion. I really need to thank my dad.

While such heartwarming thing was happening, Bikou is ———

“Hehehe, well, going fish in such big group isn’t that bad. Oi, why don’t you dive into the sea and catch us some fish as well?”

“……”

He taunts Fenrir and then———

“Ouuuuuuuuuuuuch! You bit me you damn wolfffffff! Your fangs aren’t a simple joke dammit!”

He got himself bitten remarkably.

Perhaps slapping Fenrir around its head brought this accident.

“Tosuka, that’s the sea.”

“Woah, it’s all water!”

I watch over Kiba and Tosuka-san that are enjoying the sea peacefully and then proceed to go around this island to find my fishing spot. I haven’t done fishing since my survival training so it’s been a long time.

……I’ll have myself do an enjoyable fishing which I have forgotten for a long time.

———And the surprising person who walks besides me is,

“I’ll tag along you for today.”

Vali is coming with me! I really am surprised!

And like this a strange fishing between Vali and I began.

Vali and I started to fish at the seashore which is located directly opposite the base site my mom made.

“Oh, looks like you caught your first one.”

Vali who is fishing just a bit away from me got his first hit.

Vali then says.

“Azazel took me to fishing quite often. Well, it sure did become handy during camp.”

“I see. Azazel-sensei did mention about his fishing experience.”

“.....”

“.....”

A silent time follows right after our discussion. We try to find the right time to communicate while fishing.

Few mintues later the one who speaks first is Vali.

“It’s almost time for your High-class Devil promotion ceremony huh.”

“Yeah, it’s a day after tomorrow.”
Yeah, High-class promotion day is coming up soon. I would never have imagined it will happen this soon when they told me about this news..... I can’t help but think the higher-ups wanted to get this over and done with right away.

They may want to use me soon as they promote me or they may want to send me to do another task. Or maybe both. There’s no method to find out their intention.

Well, I hear that the higher-ups lost their place soon as the cheating scandal for the Rating Game was revealed. Ajuka Beelzebub-sama also prosecuted their mistakes strongly and has been capturing and revealing the crimes committed. There are many people with authorities that has lost their place and was forced to resign their post than we all imagined due to this incident. So there’s no doubt this will

greatly affect the political world, the business community, the human world, and many other departments.

Though there has been certain solutions prepared already to minimise the impact it will cause. So they have assigned even Reincarnated Devils that has potential and are trustable from each specialist to each department and left them in charge in how they will operate and work.

Those who had the ability in specific department but couldn’t join there due to the geezers from the old Devil’s era can finally release their true potential……huh.

The Reincarnated Devils that were gifted with ability but couldn’t work in the department they excel in due to the politics. The ones who listed their names up and recorded them on the lists were the Four Great Satans.

They had been checking for dozens to hundreds of years in order to have them work when a big opportunity was to arise and now those Reincarnated Devils were left in charge at specific departments.

……The Underworld is going to change. No, it needs to change.

————If we are the ones that are able to change it then I can’t ask for an honorary task more than this.

……And my promotion to a High-class Devil is going to be the first step to reach that goal.

I then say it to Vali.

“I’m going to take a day off from school for the promotion ceremony. It can’t be helped since that’s the only day which suits everyone. ……Well, I’m actually really nervous. They

are saying that many people will come and there will also be television camera. I still can’t believe this is happening.”

My promotion to a High-class Devil is announced even outside of the Underworld so even the other forces knows about it. I hear that many request for news coverage is being sent to the Gremory castle every day from the television studios of the Underworld.

They said that a High-class Devil promotion has never been so anticipated as this so it feels it’s not happening in this world where I can’t seem to sense the feel of reality at this.

But Vali says it to me with a serious face.

“This a natural to happen. You are a hero who saved the Underworld several times already. It isn’t stranger for not just the Underworld but also for the other forces to pay attention to you. There’s nothing to be nervous about since the ceremony will end in a blink of an eye. And then they will hand you something which will look like this.”

Saying that, Vali puts his rod down and approaches me. He takes out a document which has been rolled like a scroll from his pocket and passes it to me.

When I spread open the highly decorated parchment in suspicion———I find hard looking Devil’s symbol written on it and my eyes get wide open at this single phrase. This is what it says.

———We shall appoint you, Vali Lucifer, as a Ultimate-class Devil.

———!?

I’m so surprised that a sound didn’t appear from my throat and then I look at Vali. He has his usual cool atmosphere, but……

Seriously!? W-When on earth did this guy become a Ultimate-class!?

“O-Oi, for real!?”

I can’t help but say simply that in shock!

Vali then explains with a bitter smile.

“I did decline it once but they told me this was Azazel’s wish. They also said it will come with many kinds of authorities with it if I am to be active in the Underworld. Well, I simply received this in secret though. ……Fu, even I can’t capture Ajuka Beelzebub’s intention.”

W-Well, if this guy is going to become active as a Devil then getting the position of a Ultimate-class Devil won’t be strange at all……

“Hah.”

I find it so amusing that I blurted in laughter like that.

……Ah, man. How should I put it? There was a guy right beside me who just had become a Ultimate-class Devil immediately while I was thinking so hard about becoming a High-class Devil where he even said that the “the ceremony will end in a blink of an eye”…… That’s what I found it funny and started laughing.

Vali then says.

“You can’t believe it right? Neither can I. That’s how it is. And in your case it’s a special circumstance. It’s a promotion when it hasn’t been a year since you became a Devil. Though it’s also true that the you so many abnormal situations fell on you consecutively. Let’s go through a brief explanation.”

———Then Vali starts to point of the incidents then happened around me in the last one year.

“Hyoudou Issei became a Devil last spring. He was dragged into a battle against the Fallen Angels immediately and experienced the Rating Game within one year. Then he encountered the incident involving the possession of Excaliber without a moment to spare where he met one of the leaders of the Fallen Angels and at the end even the Governor. He witnessed the signing of the Alliance of the Three Great Powers upclose and even survived the experience of Juggernaut Drive. He was attacked by the Evil God Loki and Fenrir when it has or hasn’t been 6 months since he reincarnated into a Devil. He fought the man who wields the strongest Longinus during his school fieldtrip. He conquered the Rating Game of the Underworld’s Youth and then promoted a Mid-class Devil. At the decisive battle against the Hero-faction———he went through life and death experience during the monster crises and resurrected by the power of Ophis and Great Red which is an unpredictable happening. He then proceeded to defeat the Jabberwock and Cao Cao in that flow. It hasn’t even been a year since all of this accomplishment. Terrifying indeed. It’s full of events which can only make you laugh in amazement. Then it was the battle against Qlippoth. He received an assault from the Evil Dragon Grendel and witnessed the destruction of the country of Vampires upclose. He was there during the hijack of the Agreas and when the year was about to end he was present during the Qlippoth’s assault of the

Heaven. He accepted the challenge from the Church's swordsman soon as the new year began…… And finally he was there during the final battle against Rizevim to beat him down and then defeated Apophis where now he is standing right here."

By listening to Vali's long explanation……I came to realise how the past one year was packed with actions. What my comrades, Vali, and I experienced in the past one year was out of the ordinary.

Vali then says.

"You probably wouldn't find any other example where this many history changing events occurred just in one year. Everyone including you, your comrade, and myself are living in a incredible era. For that reason, I could say that it would be natural for our ratings to keep on going up since we had survived this far. That's why you are getting a promotion…… though I wouldn't be surprised if you are bewildered to the point where your mind can't keep up with becoming a High-class Devil since you have barely experienced your time as a Low-class Devil and Mid-class Devil."

……Yeah, I'm going to become a High-class Devil when it hasn't been a year since I was both a Low-class and Mid-class Devil combined and that's the reason why I'm feeling perplexed.

At the end I haven't done anything like a Mid-class Devil would usually do and I even question myself if I actually did my role as a Low-class Devil properly. ……But since I'm promoting to a High-class Devil due to the reviews of others must mean that I'm doing well from other people's perspective. Well, that's what I would like to believe.

But how should I put it…… I’m laughing a bit due to the way Vali is speaking.

Because the way he talks is totally like———

“……The way you said it sounded like it came from Azazel-sensei.”

When I say that Vali smiles.

“……Is that so.”

After that there’s another moment of silence.

“ “By the way.” ”

Vali and my words overlaps.

“……You go first.”

Vali asks without hesitation when I urge him.

“———You are going to participate right?”

“The Rating Game tournament? ……Hmm, who knows. You are obviously going to———”

“I’m participating. Even if you aren’t that is. This is a perfect opportunity. After all, there are several God-class participants that has already registered. Being able to challenge a God officially without causing troubles to anyone. There won’t be a chance like this again. I will be forming a team while having those guys the first Sun Wukong told me to look after.”

Yes, the participants’ standards for the World Tournament has a large range so even a God can participate. Though it seems like it has a stronger festival vibe to it, therefore the

rules has changed quite a bit compared to the usual Rating Game.

First of all, the maximum number of people in a team is 16. The team would be formed with the [King], the [Queen], two of each [Rook], [Bishop], [Knight], and eight [Pawns]. This is the same as usual but from here it's different. If you register yourself as [King] then your team members don't need to be part of your peerage. And they don't have to be a Devil either. To put it simple its fine as long as you don't double register.

If a Devil registers himself as a [King] it will be fine for an Angel to be in his team and even a human is fine. You can actually form your team to your liking.

Also, even if there is someone who reincarnated into a Devil by the use of a [Bishop] piece he can still be registered under other chess pieces. This is a big change. So it means that Asia who is a [Bishop] can register as a [Knight] in the tournament for example.

Well, I won't want to have Asia-chan stand in the frontline anyways.

Due to these changes there are many people from each forces that showed interest in participating. And there are God-class among them.

For Vali who is seeking to fight Gods there won't be a tournament he will crave for more than this. And he can fight them publically without being warned.

Vali himself is explaining in joy.

"……I would be lying if I say that I'm not hyped, right?"

It came to my mind as I look at this guy who seems to be having fun.

The ones that made the base for the Rating Game World Tournament is Azazel-sensei, Sirzechs-sama, and such since they had been preparing for it behind the scene.

……Maybe Azazel-sensei prepared a stage for Vali to fight the Gods without having him become a criminal. I even start to think as such.

Vali then says it straight to me.

“And if I can fight your team in the tournament then there’s nothing more I can ask for. I’m guessing others such as Cao Cao, Sairaorg Bael, and Dulio Gesualdo are thinking the same. I even hear that gentle Ikuse Tobio is planning to register as a [King].”

……I will be able to fight Vali, Cao Cao, Sairaorg-san, Dulio, Ikuse in a Rating Game———

But then Vali also says this in calm manner.

“……Even so, I’m sure you have your own circumstance. Your body doesn’t belong to only you now.”

……I start to become deeply moved at Vali who is able to think about other people’s circumstance.

“You sure did change. A bit ago you would have told me to ‘participate’, right?”

Vali……really changed. Especially lately where he has become calmer…… It feels like his ‘stay away’ aura disappeared.

Vali simply tilts his head.

“……Did I? ……I guess I did. But you yourself has changed since I first met you. The side of you where you are honest about your sexual desire hasn’t changed———but the eyes you have right now is telling me that you want something besides women.”
Vali who is smiling gets another hit with his fishing rod. Vali pulls it right away. He pulled a large fish which may be his biggest catch of the day.

“But it seems like I win for today’s fishing battle. Hyoudou Issei.”

……Looks like the God of Sea is giving his powers to Vali today.

“And also about your ceremony. I also received the invitation. I’ll come if I’m in a mood.”

“Well, thanks for that then.”

I then look up to the sky.

I couldn’t give any answers to Vali’s words then……but it’s also true that all these feelings are building inside me———

To participate in the Rating Game World Tournament with my own team———

Life.2 And thus, to a High-class Devil

The next day——— it’s the day before the High-class Devil promotion ceremony.

I’m currently with a certain person and am visiting the Kuou academy which is empty of people.

“Oh, so this is the Kuou academy!”

The one who is acting really excited by looking at the school building from next to me is a girl with a fox’s ear——— it’s Kunou.

Kunou who is going to be joining the Kuou academy’s elementary campus from next year. She came from Kyoto because she wanted to see the academy.

———Though the building I’m showing her right now is high school building which is the one all of us are going to all the time. I brought her here because she said she wants to see the high school building right after we showed her the elementary building.

The elementary and the junior school is located on the same campus. A bit further away from them is the high school campus and the college campus. We are planning to go to the college campus once we take a look around here. It’s the place where Rias and Akeno-san will be attending very soon. So I may as well check it out too. Though I went there several times already since I had business there.

Kunou is already wearing the elementary uniform. Since it’s a different uniform to the high school uniform that we wear it definitely has a refreshing taste to it. Well, I entered Kuou academy since the start of high school life so it’s natural that I’m not familiar with the uniform from the kindergarten up to the junior.

From what I heard, Kunou will be moving into the Hyoudou residence from Summer. She will be going to the junior school soon as she lives here and gets acustmoised in living here.

———Then, when Kunou and I were looking around the school building from the outside we encounter someone familiar.

“Ah, former student president Sona.”

It’s the former student president Sona. She’s looking up at the school building from the entrance.

She notices our voice and as soon as she sees us she smiles at us.

“Oh, Ise-kun. How do you do. Oh my, you must be the princess from Kyoto I presume? Now that I remember I did hear that you will be enrolling into the elementary division from Spring.”

Kunou bows her head.

“I presume you are Sitri-dono. I am the daughter of Yasaka who is the leader of the youkais in Kyoto, and Kunou is my name. I’m very pleased to make your acquaintance.”

The former student president responds to her formal introduction by giving her gratitude.

The former student president says it as she looks up to the building again.

“I used my days off to take a look around the Kunou academy.”

She narrows her eyes as if she was feeling nostalgic.

“……I remember very well when I first came here. Rias brought me here to this place.”

I think I heard Rias told me that before briefly. Apparently she brought the former student president to this place forcefully when there weren’t much people and then she showed her around.

The former student president Sona then says.

“I’m sure Rias wanted to show this place which she would be attending to me as I was her childhood friend. I can still remember the happy face she had when she was showing me around.”

“Did you enrol here due to Rias’s suggestion?”

This is what the former student president replies to my question.

“Rias didn’t suggest it to me but I must have become enchanted to this place when she was showing me around. It was already decided that I will be going to the high school in the Underworld but I cancelled going there and came to this academy instead. If I try to remember the shocked face my sister had when I said I would be attending here was priceless, ufufu.”

After she had a small laugh she looks down and continues with a fragile but yearnly face.

“…….Many things had happened here in the past three years. Especially when I became a third year student there had been continuous event filled of suprises.”

……The former student president had her own kind of three years here. The experiences she had from the different perspective from Rias.

And Leviathan-sama who had been watching her from behind with warm eyes for the past three-years is——— no longer here. She is currently battling the Trihexa in a very long battle inside the isolated barrier.

From what I heard from Rias the sorrow inside the former student president is something which you cannot express by words.

Sona, the former student president, who usually had been putting up with her sister who wasn’t serious most of the time……but she is worried about Leviathan-sama more than anyone and she loves and respects her more than anyone.

I hear the fact that she cannot show her sister when she graduate is making her sad the most.

……I am sure Leviathan-sama wanted to see her sister’s graduation which will be her sister’s shining moment……

———Then a new person appears to the scene.

“Ah, Kaichou. You are here.”

It’s Saji. Looks like he came here to find her.

“Saji, did something happen?”

Saji says it when the former student president asks him.

“Looks like the matter from before can be proceeded. Tsubaki-san asked me to find you.”

Then the former student president lifts her glasses from the side and puts on her usual cool demeanor.

“Is that so. Since I had a look around here we should return then. Now then, Ise-kun, congratulation for your promotion. I will be attending the ceremonial hall.”

“T-Thank you.”

The former student president leaves after saying that.

It seems like Saji also has business with me so this is what he says after his master leaves.

“Oh yeah. Hyoudou, I heard about your promotion to the High-class Devil. Congrats! I will definitely become one in the future as well!”

Saji who congratulates me with a smile. He starts patting my back.

“Well, I still can’t believe that this is happening……but thanks.”

“……By the way, Hyoudou.”

Saji suddenly puts on a serious look and then he asks me.

“Hmm? What’s wrong?”

“What are you going to do about the tournament? We’ll definitely be participating. I will be fighting under Sona-kaichou as her [Pawn]. Are you going to participate under Rias-senpai? Or are you————”

————He must want to ask me if I’m going to be participating as a [King] with my own team.

“……You are asking me the same question like Vali. Well, who knows.”

I give him a vague answer……

Saji then says it as he looks up to the sky.

“————I received an offer to promote to the Mid-class Devil.”

“————! Seriously? Congrats!”

I congratuate him from the bottom of my heart.

Wow, that’s good to hear! Well, he did survive this far after getting involved in that many battles! Furthermore, I heard that the biggest achievement the Sitri group made was during the underattack of the Great King Bael’s castle which was ochestrated by the third ranking King of the Rating Game.

I hear that it was not only the Great-King faction but also the Maou-faction gave them an applause. It’s rare to find an instance where both factions rate them positively at the same time.

There are talks about promotions for those in our peerage so it’s not weird for Saji to get one as well.

Saji then says it shyly.

“……Tsubaki-san also got a talk about the promotion but I’m guessing the battles we fought as the part of D×D played the biggest role in this.”

Saji takes a big breath. He then asks me by looking directly at my eyes.

“You……became my aim which has went too far ahead of me……but that’s why. I’m not sure whether I can fight you but show me your “game”. Wasn’t going wild in the Rating Game part of our aim too? Then as the peer [Pawn] of yours’, I want to stand on the same stage as you……I really do!”

———!

……I got words of manly passion from Saji from face to face who is my peer!

Dammit! Vali. And you. I really do wonder why you guys always get to the point without saying it in a vague way!

Then Saji cools himself and apologises.

“……Sorry, I suddenly said something weird. Don’t take it seriously.”

However, he starts banging my chest with his fist.

“……Eitherway, come no matter in what way. ———I don’t even think a bit that the match we had in the Underworld was my win at all. That’s why when we clash head on in the tournament I want to continue that fight. Both you and I are alot stronger than back then.”

Continue of that fight———

During Summer last year I had a bitter experience. The battle where it’s also hard for me to say that I won.

I always thought about settling that score.

I also bang on Saji’s chest with my fist.

“Yeah, when that happens then let’s continue that fight. ———I always thought about beating you on the Rating Game’s battlefield.”

Those words naturally came out of my mouth.

As if I’m participating in the tournament———

Saji confirms that and leaves.

The two of us, Kunou and myself, that are left alone. Kunou then starts nodding her head.

“So many passionate boys sure do come around Ise~!”

Yeah, you are exactly right.

It feels like the important button inside me is about to turn on due to their heat.

———○●○———

And the day of my destiny———the day of my High-class promotion ceremony.

I’m visting the Underworld together with the ORC members, Rias’s parents, and my parents. That’s right, my parents has finally entered the Underworld as well. Well, during the War of Evil Dragons they came to the hospital of the Underworld but that was due to emergency.

This time they are here as my relatives since this will my ceremony.

Ignoring my parents who are speechless at how huge the Gremory castle is, I proceed to do the final confirmation for the ceremony by doing another check with Rias in another room.

……I've been getting lectures and outlines of the ceremony at my house together with Rias and others since we heard the news about my promotion……but due to today being the actual day it's possible that what I have learnt might have dissapeared from my head. In order to not embarass myself, I'm practicing in the ceremonial hall of the Gremory castle and am reconfirming the whole procedures of the ceremony with Rias.

Rias stands in front of the altar at the ceremonial hall and teaches me.

"————Maou-sama will read the certificate which he will give to you. You will need to reply to him the way I taught you. Next I will put on the crown on your head. This is the ritual where one from the peerage is being acknowledged as a [King]. And finally you will be moved to the stone where you will register yourself as a [King]. It's okay to touch the stone after Maou-sama's words. The ritual is pretty much over once you get to this point. Right? Simple, isn't it?"

That's what Rias says! I hear that so many people including the media will be coming to the ceremonial hall…… So I won't be able to show the pathetic side of me!

"Ugh, I'm so nervous."

I'm already dressed up in my formal clothing. Likewise, Rias who will be appearing in the ritual is wearing her crimson

dress. People will pay attention to us even on our way there so wearing formal dress is essential. The truth is those in our peerage, my comrades, are wearing formal dress as well. It’s a proper clothing which won’t look strange from anyone’s perspective.

Well, Rias and I need to wear another formal dress for the ritual once we get there. So this isn’t our main dress.

Now that I think about it, I haven’t seen Grayfia-san since we got here.

Grayfia-san who is the only one that remained here in this world from her peerage. Each of the Maou-sama has left their [Queen] behind after thinking about the future of the Underworld and hence Grayfia-san remained here.

……I heard that she’s been doing her duty as a maid as usual but I haven’t seen her today. Except, Rias is really worried about her.

[……I’m worried about Onee-sama.]

————As such, Rias has been speaking out her thought every now and then to me.

I haven’t seen Grayfia-san since then. But from Rias who has seen her said that Grayfia-san hasn’t changed and is acting as usual even though Sirzechs-sama went to that side……

I have witnessed how Grayfia-san was holding onto Sirzechs-sama in tears just before he left. It’s natural that she was in that much shock. That is why I’m more worried about how she is acting in a calm behaviour like usual……

She may be hiding her emotions……but Rias who has been cared by her since she was a child is really worried about

her.

……I hope she doesn’t faint afterwards due to anxiety……

“Rias-sama, Waka-sama, it is time.”

————The attendant informs us. It’s finally time!

We will be getting on the train from the castle town’s station of the Gremory castle and head to the capital city, Lilith. We are in a strict guard while we are on the train. Obviously. The place we are heading to is full of crowds. There are many Devils consisting of civillians and those working in news broadcast team.

“Hyoudou Issei-san, please tell us how you are feeling right now!”

“Will you be participating in the World Rating Game Tournament!? Sir Sairaorg Bael and Lady Sona Sitri that are the same youth as you have declared their intent on————”

There are countless flashes from the camera. There are also countless number of questions thrown at me from the media which passed my ears like noises. I was ordered not to say anything beforehand so I only have in mind about getting inside the train.

And I finally sit on the seat inside the train. The train starts moving before long. I’m finally able to take a break. …… Aaaaaah, this is so tiring. The fatigue already has struck me when I haven’t even went through with the ritual yet…… I-I never would have imagined that everyone are putting this much attention on me…… Well, I was told about this beforehand but it is more than I imagined…… I’m told that there is a party right after the ritual and then I will finally be

able to take my formal clothes off. So it means that I won't be able to escape for the whole day.

Just after a while since the train moved. Ravel suddenly points to the scenery outside.

There is a huge dorm-type stadium.

"That stadium is going to be used as one of the arena for the upcoming World Tournament from what I have heard."

I also look at the stadium. It's huge. It's way bigger than the Tokyo dorm. Well, the Rating Game is played in a large battlefield after all. It's obviously better for it to be huge.

"Aren't the venues mostly from the Underworld which will come from the Devil's and the Fallen Angel's territories?"

That's what I said.

From what I heard the Underworld, more specifically the Devil's side, will be providing the most venues for the World Tournament since the Rating Game originated from here. And the Fallen Angels will be aiding the Devil's side. I did hear from Azazel-sensei before that there are territories still available within the Fallen Angel's side and that they are promoting a holiday house to the VIPs of each forces.

I'm guessing that they have used that available territories to prepare the stadium.

Rias then says.

"All of the other mythology world are still worn from the attack by the Trihexa which had happened recently. That is why the Underworld which received the least damages are offering the stadium."

Ravel continues after her.

“It originated from the Underworld hence the reason why it was decided the majority of the matches for the first World Tournament would be held here.”

The one who continues this discussion is Rias’s parents who is on the train with us.

This is what Rias’s father says.

“Even so, most of the organizing committee of the game in our world isn’t taking part in this upcoming world tournament. I heard they will be organising the tournament with excellent staffs which would be led by Ajuka-dono.”

“Am I right to presume this has to do with how the cheating scandal was revealed?”

Rias’s dad nods his head to my question and raises his finger.

“That is obviously the part of that but there’s also one more reason. It appears that each forces has shown interest in taking in the Rating Game as an entertainment so there’s also the fact that those staff members from each factions would be taught the procedure of Rating Game.”

Now I get it. I heard about the topic about the Rating Game turning into a world entertainment but it seems like they are going to teach those staffs the content of the Rating Game through this tournament at once. Well, if the popularity of the game increases in each forces then the Rating Game played between different forces will definitely get heated up.

Rias’s dad explains further.

“Once the Rating Game attains worldwide citizenship where it becomes possible for transfer and exchanges between the team of all forces then the game will get heated up even more.”

“So it means the Rating Game won’t be just for the Devils in the future.”

Words slips from my mouth.

……The Angels will be playing the Rating Game in the future. It will also become popular in the Norse mythology world and even the Japanese youkais may do it in our homeland. The Rating Game won’t just be for the Devils but for everyone. Yeah, I definitely want to see that happen.

Rias says it while looking out the window.

“…… Diehauser Belial-sama would have been thrilled if he were to know this.”

……

Everyone becomes speechless at her words.

……Emperor Belial who committed a crime due to carrying complicated thoughts. People say that he loved the Rating Game more than anyone. He craved for someone who would defeat him. We may have found someone who could defeat him as the internationalization of the Rating Game turns into reality. However, he’s currently inside the cell. For the Champion to be absent when the revolutionary Rating Game is about to start…… It’s a shame.

……I also wanted to defeat him head on. I was no match for him at all at Agreas. But the next time it will be different……!

———I also want to challenge and defeat the Champion!

……But in Rias’s team? Or———

I shake my head after thinking too much about it and try my best to clear my mind. The only thing I need to think about is to complete the ritual safely.

I can think about the Champion another time.

———Then dad and mom that are acting really stiff and sitting on the seats appears within my sights.

“……By the way, dad, mom. Both of you are acting really nervous……so are you two okay?”

Dad answers with a trembling voice.

“Y-Yeah, o-of course I’m okay! Right, honey?”

“Y-Yes, of course we are! It’s not like we are nervous for coming to a place we never have been before or because we are feeling excited about attending the event which will be our son’s shining moment!”

……These two really are acting like people from the country side who had just come to the city! Man, this is embarrassing since they are acting like this front of Rias’s parents! I can’t stand to watch them!

Seeing my parents, Rias’s dad speaks to them gently to make them feel relaxed.

“Please don’t be nervous. The only thing we ask you to do is sit on the seats as his relatives at the ceremonial hall.”

Rias’s mother continues after him with a cheerful expression.

“That’s right. You simply need to watch over your son with warm eyes. The only ones that will be called out to the stage are Ise-san who is the star of tonight’s ritual and Rias who is his [King].”

“……N-Now you are making me feel nervous.”

I mutter as such. I’m the star of today’s event! And the ritual is about to begin in few hours! Aaaaaaaaaaaaah, I’m going to have a ritual while in front of so much media! This is going to be broadcasted not just in the Underworld but also at the other force’s television right? I’m beyond nervous and it feels like my heart is about to explode and kill me!

Rias smiles at me who am putting on a stiff look.

“You have already experience many events which far exceeds this so you need to get used to things like this, okay? You have done something more remarkable such as beating Loki and Rizevim.”

T-That’s because that was a battle! It’s totally different to formal rituals like this!

Even my comrades are chuckling at seeing how stiff I am.

Geez! You guys sure have at easy since all of you simply need to sit on the seats as my relatives!

And my parents and Rias’s parents are having fun talking besides them.

Rias’s father takes out a milk container and starts to talk passionately.

“By the way. We made something like this. It’s called the “Oppai Dragon’s milk” and we made it by doing a special

manufacturing method to the milk we gathered from the cows in the Gremory territory and————”

My parents are also drawn to his explanation and are listening while nodding their head.

“Oh my, so this is one of the product based on our son ————”

“Woah, it goes down my throat so smoothly and there’s a sweet taste to it! This will be popular among both children and elderly————”

“We are planning to make it as a merchandise by summer. And there will definitely be an author’s copyright paid to your son————”

My parents are no longer feeling nervous and instead have their attention on Rias’s father’s talk.

……Well, it will be fine with me being the only one feeling nervous.

Like this, the train arrives at the Maou’s territory————

————○●○————

(Part 3)
We arrive to the station at the Maou’s territory. We then got on to several limousines to head to the ceremonial hall under strict guard. There are several security car’s surrounding the limousines…… Just how much have money and people are they using for my promotion…… This is such an honour.

We arrive to the ceremonial hall in no time. We go inside and got ourselves prepared and such. The person in charge of

taking care of me leads me where I got changed into my formal clothing for ritual purposes.

I put my hair back and they put on a make-up’s for men on my face. Since I’ve come this far I’ll just let the person taking care of me do his job. I don’t put on any retaliation and went with the flow.

After I’m finished getting prepared I get told to wait at the waiting room. Rias who is in ritual dress appears immediately.

———She’s beautiful!

Rias becomes super beautiful with makeup on! She has her hair tied up and her dress is shinny too! The lipstick on her lips makes her look more mature.

“Do I look weird?”

Maybe she doubted the way I looked at her. So she starts looking at how she’s dressed.

“Nope. You look gorgeous!”

I answer her by giving her a thumbs-up.

It’s time. Rias and I head to the entrance of the ceremonial hall. I stand behind Rias and I have to follow behind her once the entrance opens.

There are guards standing at the sides of the double door. Around us are soldiers that are working a securities and other staffs.

……Ugh, I’m getting even more nervous! Wonder if I can do this. I’m getting worried but Rias turns around and smiles at

me.

“It will be fine. This is the ceremonial to congratulate you. So show it to everyone. ———The result of what you have achieved by all the experiences you gained by going forward in the past one year.”

———!

……The result of the one year I had experienced……

In such situation my High-class promotion ceremony finally begins. Then the drum rolls. The double door opens quietly along with the music that is played for my entrance.

What appears in the spacious view in front of me are——— the higher-ups in formal dress lined up at the splendid and gorgeous ceremonial hall where they are looking at me as they give me an applause.

Rias walks forward. I follow behind her in a speed where I make sure I don’t get left behind in a speed which won’t make me look weird.

I take a quick glimpse where I can see the ORC members and it appears the Sitri group and Sairaorg-san are also here. Ah, I can see Vali and his comrades at the corner of the hall near the pillar.

As we head to the altar, I start to get all these flashbacks of the last one year Rias mentioned.

———I am Rias Gremory. I am a Devil. And I am your Master. Nice to meet you, Hyoudou Issei-kun. Can I call you Ise?

All my meeting started from my death.

———Ahahahaha! It’s impossible! Because she died! That girl is dead, you know? It’s not the matter of whether you protect her or not. You couldn’t protect her! You couldn’t protect her back at evening and even now! You really are a weird boy! It’s so amusing!

Raynare…… Can you see how I have become a High-class Devil? I won’t let anyone die again.

———Fire bird and Fenghuang! The hell fire of our clan that was praised as being that of a Phoenix! Taste it with your own body and turn into ashes!

It was hot. Raiser, your fire was hot back then and also during our rematch.

———No. I’m living so I can seek my revenge. Holy-sword Excalibur. Destroying that is the reason why I am living.

Heh, Kiba. There was a time when you said that. Take care of Tosuka-san.

———Do you think a world without God is wrong? Do you think a world without God would decay? I am sorry to say, but that isn’t the case. Both you and I are healthily living like this. ———The world moves even without a God.

You were right, Azazel-sensei. We were able to manage it somehow even with the God’s presence.

———Ise-san, I love you. I will always stay beside you.

I love you too, Asia. Let’s stay together forever.

———It means that there are those who find it painful in what you call a peace.

Vali. That’s what you said before. But maybe the peace you imagine is the same is mine now.

———Hyoudou Issei! I won’t lose! There is a dream I need to fulfill!

Sairaorg-san, those exchanges of punches I had with you is my pride.

———……Friend? What’s the benefit if I become that?

You benefited from it, didn’t you, Ophis?

———I want to confirm. ———Hyoudou Issei. What are you?

I am just me, Cao Cao. I will become a High-class Devil while being myself.

———I also have the ambition of wanting to stir up the heat with you as well!

Of course, Ravel. I’m a pathetic guy but I really need you so I can fulfill my ambition.

———Rias-buchou, Akeno-san, Koneko-chan, Yuuto-senpai, Asia-senpai, Xenovia-senpai, Irina-senpai, Ravel-san, Rossweisse-san, Azazel-sensei, and the Sekiryuutei—Ise-senpai. After all, all of you are my precious comrades———

Whether you are Gya-suke or Balor, you are my important junior and a strong Gremory boy.

———Hey, Ise-kun. If I ever get used by them……will you please kill me?

Rossweisse-san, I will never let you say such thing ever again.

————An angel’s kiss! It was because the scene was so beautiful. People would naturally want to kiss like this.

Seriously, thanks to you it became an awesome Christmas. It became a kiss I can never forget.

————Everyone, make this become a happy Kuoh Academy. No, I’ll do it. So, I’d like everyone to please take care of me.

I’m looking forward to it, Xenovia-kaichou! I will become your help anytime.

————Even if he has reincarnated and his appearance has changed, he’s still my child, isn’t that right?

……Of course I am. I am the son of dad and mom. That will never change even if it’s ten-thousand years later.

————……Azazel said you that you were his last, and his best student……

……

……

……Why aren’t you here? ————Sensei, I wanted to show you this scene which will be my shining moment.

I start to remember all these events as I walk to the altar ————and there’s this feeling building inside me.

But I need to endure my tears. I am not allowed to cry yet. The real deal will start from here.

Just one year————. But one year that was filled with so many events————.

A year like this. I will most likely never experience ever again.

I have survived a harsh, yet fun, year. I stand front of the altar while having pride in what I have gone through———.

That instant, I receive words of congratulation from partner.

[Congratulation, partner. Good work on coming this far. You reached Balance Breaker, you survived Juggernaut Drive, and you showed me all the new side of being a Sekiryuutei. Let's get along from now on as well, the one who is a Devil and Dragon, the one who has a blazing truth within him. ———"Sekiryuutei of the Issei (Blazing Truth)".]

Yeah, thanks, Ddraig. Because you were by my side I was able to fight. Take care of me from now on as well, the Emperor of the Red Dragons, Y Ddraig Goch!

And the one who awaits me at the altar is Ajuka Beelzebub-sama who is in his awesome looking Maou outfit. ……Just how happy I would have been if Sirzechs-sama was next to him.

"I have been waiting for this. ———From here on you will become one fine High-class Devil."

Under the Maou-sama's guidance who gave me such words the ritual finally begins.

"———And so, the next will be———"

I sit on the chair which is beside the altar with Rias and followed the guidance of the host of this ceremony.

One of the best opera singer who had offered her intention on singing for this ceremony is about to start her

performance. She stands in front of the microphone stand which is set on the altar and then she starts to sing.

[Theeere is a Ooooooppai-loving Dragon living in the edge of a certain countrrrrrry~.]

———What started with her beautiful voice was the Oppai Dragon’s song!

[Draaaaaagon, Draaaaaagon, Opaiiiiii Dragon~.]

I don’t know how I’m supposed to feel with that song despite the beautiful voice!

Even my comrades in the ceremonial hall doesn’t know how to react so they are putting on a troubled expression instead!

But for some reason Rias’s dad has a deeply moved expression! He looks like he’s so moved that he’s thinking it was a terrific idea to call her!

Rias has a red face and is twitching one of her eyebrows! Ah, this pretty much guarantees Rias’s dad getting a long full on lectures from his daughter after this.

After the song, the ritual finally phases into the main part. Rias and I stand at the altar and the first thing that will happen is the receiving of the certificate. Maou Ajuka Beelzebub-sama starts reading what’s written on the certificate.

“———For those reason, I hearby proclaim you, the servant of Rias Gremory, Hyoudou Issei, as a High-class Devil.”

I got on my knee and received the certificate gratefully. Now, here is my line.

“It will be my honour.”

———I reply in a complicated manner.

I heard there are those who uses exaggerated words or really long lines at this situation. But I gave a plain answer since I was told that the simple reply would be the best. Well, exaggerated words would be impossible for a high school student like me!

I got up once to spread my certificate front of the crowd so they can have a clear look. Wow, there’s a sudden rain of claps and camera flashes!

———I then hand the certificate to the person helping me. Next is the ritual where Rias who is my master puts on a crown on my head.

Rias and I stand at the altar and face each other. I then got on my knee. Rias receives the crown from the person in charge. And then she———puts on the crown on my head. It appears like a real crown so I can feel the heavy weight.

Then there is another applause. Alright, with this the ritual for the crowning is over.

For the last part the Maou Beelzebub-sama appears on the altar once again and raises his hand. Then a stone monument which is shining in black colour comes falling from above our head. The stone monument which floats in the air.

……So this is the monument which is essential for registering a High-class Devil that I heard about. I heard that by touching this, the requirement as a High-class Devil ——— and a [King] is completed.

“Now, the new [King], Hyoudou Issei. Stand in front of the monument————”

Maou-sama urges me.

I take a step forward while enveloping my left hand with my aura ———— and then touch the monument.

Heart beat! That instant, my heart made a loud beat! Now I get it. This monument is made from the same material as the Evil Pieces.

The monument shines red ————no, it shines in crimson, and then shows my hand print for an instant. And then it returns to the normal monument.

……I’m guessing the……registration is done with this then?

I then receive a small box from Maou-sama. When I open it I found ———— 15 Evil Pieces inside!

……T-This is the Evil Pieces solely for me! What I craved for so long is finally in my hands……!

As such, the ritual is done with the most crucial part of the ceremony. What came after this is the words of congratulation from the guest which was read by the host of the ceremony.

Since Rias and I are done with our role we sit on the seat and feel a bit relieved.

After all the itinerary was over Rias and I left the stage. I was overwhelmed when everyone started clapping as we left!

I return to my changing room. I start to get calm after I finished drinking water.

The one who spoke to me first after finishing my ritual is ——— my master, Rias.

“Congratulation, Ise.”

“Thank you! Though I wonder if I did it right.”

“You sure did. You were magnificent.”

I’m happy when Rias said I was magnificent!

———And it seems like everyone is leaving the stage. So my comrades comes to my room one after another.

My dad and mom are emotional while others are congratulating me.

“I don’t know what was going on in there but it sure does make me emotional when I see Ise under the spotlight! Right, honey!?”

“You are right, darling. It sure does make me emotional since it seems like our son has gained a higher social status than his father! By the way, what kind of privilege does High-class Devil have? I wonder if you get a pay rise?”

Dad grabs me by my shoulder and says this.

“Ise! If you become a person who is above me than why don’t you buy us a ticket for a holiday with your bonus!? One of my dreams was to be given a present from our son to go on a tour with your mother!”

“The hot natural bath at Kusatsu sure would be nice.”

O-Onsen tour huh. I-If it’s just that then I’m sure I can fulfill their wish right away, I think.

More importantly, am I above my dad now? We live in a completely different working field so I can’t make any judgment.

Rias then tells my parents.

“It’s far from it. With Ise’s current status then getting a world tour isn’t even a dream.”

“ “A W-W-W-World touuuuuur~!!?” ”

Both of them are shocked at Rias’s words and their bodies are shaking.

……The grade of the tour jumped by ten folds! From Kumatsu to a world tour……! I guess I have to work hard to work on my parent-and-son relationship!

———Then this time two unexpected people appears in my room.

“Hyoudou Issei! So you are here.”

It’s Raiser! So he was at the hall!

“Raiser-san! You came!”

When I said that, Raiser replies as he blushes.

“Hmph, appearing to the place where I am invited to as the way I live. Besides, I’m here as an escort today.”

“As an escort?”

I become curious but the person who is enters the changing room from the direction Raiser is gazing towards is ——— a familiar lady.

“Hyoudou Issei-san, how do you do? You have become a High-class Devil so I wanted to formally give you my words of congratulation.”

Ravel’s mom! The wife of the current Head of the House of Phoenix!

“O-Oh my, if this isn’t Ravel’s mother! It really has been awhile! And thank you!”

I respond by bowing my head down! I never expected for Ravel’s mom to come! I can’t feel grateful enough!

Even Ravel is shocked at this.

“O-Okaa-sama! You came!?”

“Yes, I came here while bringing Raiser with me. We were standing at the side of the hall.”

Ah, that’s why I couldn’t see them.

Ravel’s mom then moves into another topic to get to the main point.

“Now then, Hyoudou Issei-san. Do you remember the promise we made earlier?”

“Umm……”

Ravel’s mom chuckles when she sees me who am totally clueless at what’s she’s talking about.

“The trade. Regarding Ravel who is both my daughter and servant. I definitely am sure I asked you for a trade once you become a High-class Devil.”

“Ah! Yes we certainly did. I am positive we made such promise……I think.”

We had such discussion over the telecommunication magic-circle when it was decided that Ravel would be staying at the Hyoudou residence……I think! My memory is vague since many things had happened.

Ravel’s mom makes a proposal as if she found the right time to say it.

“Then let us begin out trade right away. Did you know that it’s better to do these soon as possible? It’s also hard for me to make time so I don’t know when is the next time I can meet you.”

I can only be shocked at the suggestion of doing the trade. But here is even more suprise! Rias also gets involved!

“Yes, this certainlu may be the right time. ———Then I shall do a trade as well. Asia and Xenovia that is.”

[———!?]

All of us are shocked at this! Of course! A sudden trade for Ravel was shocking enough! But now it’s also for Asia and Xenovia!

Rias then says it to the two of them.

“Asia, Xenovia. I had been saying it since last year but you do remember about our discussing regarding the trade once Ise becomes a High-class Devil right?”

“Y-Yes!”

“Of course.”

Asia and Xenovia responds. Yeah, rather than about the trade the two of them certainly did declare that they will follow me once I become a High-class Devil.

Though that means that the trade with Rias is the requirement…… This topic is something which had been discussed among us since last year.

However. When it’s about to turn into reality, Asia and I can only be confused. Then Rias starts to draw what looks like to be a trading-purpose magic-circle with Ravel’s mom on the floor.

“Then let’s get started.”

Asia then speaks in a perplexed manner as the preparation of the trade is on progress.

“B-But……”

Rias stops her procedure for once. She then hugs Asia.

She speaks to Asia kindly as if she’s trying to calm her.

“You don’t need to worry about it. It’s not like we will be living apart from each other. And the feeling between us isn’t something which will change just with a trade, is it?”

“Y-Yes! Of course! The gratitude and respect I have for Rias-oneesama will never change!”

Rias says it fondly as she pats Asia’s head.

“Likewise for me, Asia. Then it means nothing will change even after you have become Ise’s servant. Except, please support Ise while being under him. There are things which can only be done by you. And that is something which is

impossible for me. It’s a wonderful task which is only capable by you, okay?”

Rias brings Xenovia towards her and hugs her along with Asia.

“I ask the same for you too, Xenovia. Please become Ise’s sword.”

Xenovia responds to her hug with a peaceful expression.

“Yeah, roger that. Former Buchou, Rias. Thank you……thank you very much for looking after me! Uuugh~!”

Xenovia suddenly cries. She starts to shed many tears.

Rias makes a bitter smile seeing that.

“Hey, don’t start crying. It’s not like our lifestyle is going to change…… Only your [King] will change so nothing else will change you know……?”

That’s right. I’ve become a [King] but it’s not like I will be living seperately from Rias right now. I will be living by myself once I become a High-class Devil! That will not happen.

It was a sudden promotion to a High-class Devil so I couldn’t even prepare time to become independent. Well, from here I can gradually prepare to become independent as I look at my career path. It’s just that the order of things changed a bit.

So it’s not like everyones lifestyle will change suddenly.

Kiba then says.

“Well, in a big way we can still call all of us the “Rias Gremory’s peerage”. As long as Ise-kun doesn’t move out right now then nothing will change visibly.”

Koneko-chan continues after him.

“……Ise-senpai will be summoned as Rias former-buchou’s [Pawn] once she participates in the Underworld’s Rating Game after all.”

Yeah, that’s what it must mean. When Rias participates in the professional Rating Game I simply have to join as her [Pawn].

And so, the ritual for the trade goes on.
The magic-circle which apears on the floor of the changing room. Rias, Ravel’s mom, and I stand at the side of the magic-circle. Asia, Xenovia, and Ravel stands at the centre of the magic-circle. Among the Evil-Pieces which I had just received earlier, I am holding onto the unused pieces consisted of two [Bishops] and one [Knight].

Rias and Ravel’s mom closes their eyes and increase their aura while putting their hand forward. Then the Devil symbols written on the magic-circle starts to circulate.

Then there are changes happening to the girls. What happens first is Asia and Xenovia’s body shining as if it responded to the shine from Rias’s aura. Then next, my body starts to shine and each of my [Bishop] and [Knight] that I am holding onto shines one after another.

The flow of the aura changes gradually as it bypasses the magic-circle where the Evil Pieces I’m holding onto starts to synchro with Rias’s glow. Then this time Asia and Xenovia synchros with my aura. And at the end Ravel’s mom and Ravel starts to glow while my last [Bishop] piece also glows.

Ravel and I synchro through the magic-circle where my [Bishop] piece synchros with Ravel’s mom.

Once this whole ritual ended——— Rias and Ravel’s mom stopped their aura and the magic-circle on the floor dissapears.

And then Rias picks up each of the [Bishop] and the [Knight] piece which originally belonged to me. Ravel’s mom picks up the remaining [Bishop] piece.

Rias then says it with a smile on her face.

“Alright, it’s all done now. Asia, Xenovia. From now on you are “Hyoudou Issei’s Peerage”.”

Oh really!? So this is trading! It was quite simple.

———Then Asia jumps into my arms.

“Ise-san! Ise-san, Ise-san, Ise-san!”

The way how Asia is overjoyed was shocking.

She did keep on saying how she wants to become the part of my peerage this whole time after all.

I also hug Asia.

“Yeah, Asia! With this one of my promises is fulfilled!”

“I love you! I won’t leave you anymore!”

“Hahaha, there wasn’t a single time you ever left me.”

This time Xenovia puts her arm around my neck.

“I’m also with you! Let’s go on a rampage!”

“Just don’t over do it, Xenovia!”

It’s terrifying when you go all out! Well, I can also say that’s what makes her so reliable!

“Ravel, take care of me from now on too!”

I say that to Ravel who also became my servant.

Ravel acts strong while having tears in her eyes.

“Of course. I will give my all for my [King], Ise-sama, as you manager and as your servant.”

Yeah, I will also improve myself to live up to standard of my manager, Ravel!

Ravel’s mom gives a single nod after witnessing this and then says this.

“Then I will entrust my daughter to you for eternity. I will also need to prepare for the ceremonies coming ahead ————”

“O-Okaasama! You are rushing it! Please wait till I graduate from College!”

Ravel who covers her mom’s mouth in a rush.

But once Ravel’s mom makes a single cough she whispers into my ears with a serious expression.

(……I will tell you one thing about my daughter.)

And this is what she whispers to me.

(————Ravel’s true nature is path of supremacy. The path which is easy to create grudge from others by governing the

world through military force and wisdom. It’s like oil and water when compared to you whose true nature is the path of righteous if you were to govern the world.)

———!

……Ravel’s true nature is the path of supremacy? In otherwords she will create supreme ruler?

Ravel’s mom pokes my chest using her finger and then says this with a meaningful smile.

(If you rely on Ravel then you will certainly fall into the path of supremacy. So I ask you to not make a mistake in how to use her. The reason why I took Ravel from Raiser is because I thought he would mistakingly use her even if he knows about her talent.)

……What is she saying?

Ravel and the path of supremacy…… At this time I can only tilt my head in wonder.

Irina who was watching this whole procedure is putting on a expression as if she made a certain decision.

“……So both Xenovia and Asia went to Ise-kun’s side…… Yeah, it’s about time I make a decision.”

……Irina, wonder if the trade earlier made her think of something.

———Myself who has just attained three servants. Then Raiser asks me.

“So then, Hyoudou Issei. You have become a High-class Devil which you were craving for. So I presume your aim hasn’t

changed yet, right?”

Oh, so you are asking me that question! I say it happily with a lecherous face.

“Of course I’m looking forward to the sumptuous feast! Beautiful woman and girls! Oppai, oppai, a Harem-King with so much dreams!”

Obiviously my main aim hasn’t changed. I’ve been training so hard aiming to achieve that and continued to fight strong foes despite almost losing my life.

———But I have gained ambitions other than that within this past one year.

So I reveal them.

“……Well, that’s how I started. But now on top of that aim I am thinking how wonderful it would be to live peacefully with my comrades and family. I want to make that it that way and I hope it becomes that way.”

What I realised while fighting bad guys are how important your daily life is. And furthermore how peace is the most important. More rather, if you can’t live your days peacefully then you can’t do lecherous things!

“———Ah, except there is one more thing I need to add.”

I put my finger up and make an oath.

“If there are those that will hurt my important people then I will definitely defeat them even if they may be a God.”

I declared that to everyone here with determination.

Yeah. I definitely won’t forgive those who will hurt my important people or disturb our important peaceful world even if that person might be a God.

———The War of Evil Dragons was an incident which was enough to change my values.

Raiser makes a big smile hearing that.

“You sure have become good at talking. Looks like I can entrust Ravel to you. ———Then you will be coming right?”

He says this as he puts his arm around my neck.

“The World Tournament. From the House of Phoenix my eldest brother’s and my team will be participating. I have determined that there is meaning for me to participate no matter how hard it is for me to win it. Being able to fight God-classes officially is an unthinkable situation which you could never experience.”

———!

……Oh man. Even this person has brought up this topic. And this person is also participating. Even if winning the tournament is slim he belives participating in it has a meaning———

Raiser Phoenix, both your body and soul really has become burning hot…… Just like an immortal bird. I really start to think how fighting you in the past was a great experience.

Raiser says it while messying my hair.

“I believe you will participate as a [King]. No, I am hoping for it. And if I’m able to fight you there…… Burn me up, Sekiryuutei. I will be waiting!”

———Hehe, seriously.

Even this person is asking me. I guess it’s unaviodable for those people I will be meeting from now on to ask me the same question.

Raiser and his mom leaves the changing room after they gave us a farewell after the trade———

It happens when we left the changing once our business ended and are on way to the hall where the party will be held.

We are welcoming a guest once again.

It’s a boy who looks like a middle-school student with black hair which looks bluish. He has well structured face.

I thought he was a son of a rich family who had become lost. But the moment our eyes met———

I understand by instinct that the alert level inside me went up to the max right away.

His eyes which feels as if he is seeing right through me. Fear, meanace, and shiver I get from him which feels as if he will gain control of both my body and mind…… It wasn’t just me. Others (minus my parents) have sensed the divinity and the limtless superiorness from the boy and instead of being alert all of us can simply shiver our body.

The boy says this as he makes a small chuckle.

“Hmm……I’m meeting them for the first time but I can see faces of those I heard from rumours and those I haven’t. Still, I need to give my words of congratulation. Congrates on becoming a High-class Devil, Sekiryuutei.”

The boy gives me a clap.

The one who appears from behind him are———the Maou Ajuka Beelzebub-sama and another unknown man. He’s wearing a native dress, a sari.

It isn’t a bottomless divinity as the boy, but the unknown man also had unbelieveble divinity coming from his whole body and is continuing to release a supreme aura. He’s a good looking man with a long black hair and pale white skin despite having a good build. He also has a sharp eye and after he takes a look at all of us he brings his gaze back to me.

“…….Hmm, so this is the “Sekiryuutei of the Issei (Blazing Truth)” that had defeated Loki and Apophis.”

Looks like he was observing my spec and it sounds like I have satisfied him.

Rias calls out Beelzebub-sama’s name.

“Ajuka-sama.”

Beelzebub-sama raises his hand to urge us to “not put our alert on”.

“Rias, this person here wanted to meet all of you so even if it was sudden I have brought him here.”

Saying that, Beelzebub-sama introduces the boy to us.

“———This person is Shiva-sama.”

[———!?]

……Oh my god……!

……The God of Destruction who is in a different league among the Gods and if you don’t include Great Red and Ophis he is said to be the strongest among the whole forces……!

Everyone here are in total shock (Though my parents are dumbfounded since they don’t know what’s going on here!)!

……More importantly, he came to my ceremony today!? Just how much attention am I getting today!?

The boy———Shiva, says this as he smiles at us.

“How are all of you doing, D×D……of the Kuou academy side should I say. My name is Shiva, one of the three pillar Gods. I feel that we will be meeting more frequently from now on so I wanted to give my greetings.”

He puts his hand forward……so I shake his hand while feeling frightened.

“T-Thank you for that……”

……I’m shaking hands with the God of Destruction……

———And this time the tall man who looked like his escort speaks to me.

“The promotion to a High-class Devil, allow me to congratulate you as well.”

“……Y-You are, umm.”

Shiva introduces the man to me.

“He is the young Prince of Asura.”

———!

……Hahaha, I’m totally speechless now. This time it’s the Prince of Asura!

The Prince of Asura puts his hand forward and introduces himself.

“The name is Mahabali. Nice to meet you.”

The Prince of Asura, Mahabali, says it as he shakes my hand.

“Especially you, Hyoudou Issei, I was eager to meet you. Your achivements during the War of Evil Dragons has also reached my ears. I also wanted to fight against Trihexa alongside you.”

“Y-You are flattering me……”

I can only answer him by forcing a smile on my face! That’s because two Gods……more like two pillars of Gods, but anways two pillars of Gods came all the way here just to greet me! I can only get confused at this situation which has far exceeded my expectation!

Shiva seems to be having fun since he is putting his hand under his chin.

“I have heard you were honest about your sexual desire but you don’t seem like that at all. A Harem-King is your dream, was it?”

“W-Well, I’m famous for being a lewd! I have already attained moves such as Dress Break which blows off women’s clothing and Bilingual which allows me to speak to their breast! And now I’m hoping if I can create a new move which allows me to see through women’s clothing!”

Why the heck am I explaining such things to the God of Destruction and the Prince of Asura!

And Mahabali is taking my words seriously so he’s nodding his head with a serious face!

Shiva seems to be just having fun.

“Hmm, is that so. Certainly the sexual desires has been the direct source of coming up with those moves. But from looking at you right now it’s hard to think you made such moves since I don’t sense that much sexual desires coming from you.”

Shiva points at my nose and then asks this.

“What are you seeking for right now? Is it women afterall? Or is it fame?”

“I, I want both! ……Isn’t that it?”

Shiva shakes his head at my words and then says this.

“It’s what you are seeking for from the deep of your heart. What is the most thing you desire? Not as a singular but as a whole.”

What I desire for which is not singular but as a whole……

I answer him right away.

“……I guess its peace. I want to live peacefully where there is no war. I am fighting with all my strength just for that.”

Shiva makes a single nod after hearing that. He then looks from the top of my head to the tip of my feet.

“……I see, so that’s how it is.”

It seems like there is something which convinced him.

“W-What do you mean?”

When I ask——— Shiva puts his palm on my chest.

“Yes, he simply swimmed in that boundary peacefully as he liked without being restrained by anything. Ophis despite what happened in the past is enjoying peace right now, right? If the two beings which could be said as your second parents are seeking for peace then it won’t be weird if it changed your true nature since you are made by their powers. It seems like you have greatly influenced both Great Red and Ophis but the opposite would also apply. The current you is seeking to live more than anything. ———It means you are putting your all in protecting your peacefull life. If you really want to become a Harem King then you might not be able to advance further if you don’t settle your thoughts.”

So he’s saying that I’m craving for peace more than anyone due to Great Red and Ophis’s influence.

……More importantly, this God of Destruction knows where Ophis lives huh. Was it Beelzebub-sama or Azazel-sensei that told him……

Shiva continues.

“It’s also influenced by the Infinity and the Dream but you are also seeking for peace, right? The infinity-like synergy might be strengthening that greed even further. You could say that is the price of getting a powerful power and possibility. I’m guessing that deep inside you it’s stopping you from making babies until you winning the peace with your own hands. You could say that it’s handcuff made from

karma. There is no way a former human can unequip the powers of two God-class Dragons.”

……This feeling swirling inside me. The mixed feeling I have is actually coming from…… So are you telling me that I can aim to become a Harem King after winning peace with my own hands……?

……Is that it, Great Red? Ophis? The Heavenly Dragon that is seeking for peace…… ……I see. That might be it. Both Great Red and Ophis are living so carefreely. They are trying to live in such way. The two Dragons that are called the strongest wants to enjoy peace. No, they are enjoying peace.

The two God of Dragons are like my dad and mom. If they are seeking for peace then it can’t be helped that me who is their child is being influenced by them……

Shiva laughs in amusement when he sees me thinking through all of this.

“The existence which sounds like a joke since he has the power of two Dragons that surpasses my strength is seeking for peace more than anything else and is aiming to become a Harem King, huh. …….Fufufu, you’ve taken my interest.”

Shiva who talks to Beelzebub-sama.

“Ajuka, you do remember the condition Azazel gave me, right?”

“……The case where we would prepare anything you ask for, I presume?”

Beelzebub-sama asks him.

Shiva nods.

“Yes, that’s it. ———Sekiryuutei.”

“Eh? Ah, yes?”

Shiva then says it directly to my face.

“———How about you come under me?”

[———!?]

Me and my comrades can only be shocked at this!

Shiva then tells Rias.

“Ah, don’t misunderstand me. I’m not telling him to leave your side, Rias Gremory. If a War breaksout from our mythology as the centre of it then how about he comes to my force? ———That’s what I was getting at. Even having his comrades included in it is fine. If it’s your comrades then they are promosing bunch, right?”

“Shiva-sama! But that is!”

Shiva speaks as he stops Beelzebub-sama’s words with his hand.

“The action of Śakra———Indra, increasing his forces in order to defeat me is something you are aware of, right? He is gathering notable fighters under him in order to challange me. I’m presuming that day will be unexpectdly soon. There is a high chance he will take action in the upcoming tournament. You do know there is Cao Cao and the first Sun Wukong under him, right? Then it’s natural for me to want some amusing pawns under me as well.”

“……Shiva-sama.”

Shiva shrugs his shoulder to Beelzebub-sama.

“”I won’t tell you to leave Rias Gremory’s side. But Indra has already started taking actions as he is already looking at the “next” phase, you know? Then the earlier I give you my offer the better it is.”

This time the man who is escorting him———the Prince of Asura Mahabali, says it to me. I mean why are these guys keep on talking to just me for!?

“Sekiryuutei, we the Asuras have already decided to walk along beside Shiva-sama. If you join our forces then we can’t feel anymore assured. How about it? How about you come under Shiva-sama so you can fight alongside me in the battlefield? Defeating that Indra together with us certainly will be an amusement.”

Suddenly Mahabali is releasing furious atmosphere from his whole body. At the same the small objects in this room such as cups and tables starts shaking and has a crack on them.

“I won’t forgive Indra. My father, Vairochana, was killed none other than by Śakra, that Indra, after all……! Varuna-sama who is the current King of Asura is telling me to calm down but this anger of mine is one thing I cannot calm!”

……His voice and action is packed with so much intensity and rage. His face is covered in anger.

Shiva reaches his hand out to me.

“———The “Sekiryuutei of the Issei (Blazing Truth), come under my force. If you are the servant of the Ruin Princess……no, actually you are the a Dragon that had far surpassed a Devil. Wouldn’t receiving a protection from the God of Destruction be interesting?”

……This is such a crazy offer. To tell you the truth its so out of this world that I can’t keep up with the topic. I know that I can’t recklessly take his offer. If Azazel-sensei was he here he would have interefered into this discussion but he’s no longer here.

————From now on I have to think and answer on my own.

I then ask Shiva.

“……Do you want to have war against Śakra?”

Shiva laughs.

“That won’t be a bad idea. ————Though I have become too bored with a mere war. I would prefer to prepare something more interesting. Well, I have no intention of starting a mudding war after so long.”

He’s saying it in a way as if he is evading to answer seriously.

Shiva also says this.

“Sekiryuutei of the Issei (Blazing Truth). Just remember this. From now on, whether they are friend or foe, those who would appear in front of both you and the Hakuryuukou of the Morning Star will be God-class beings. Both your connections and battles would involve many God-class. ————That’s how much feat you two demonstrated. You may be a Dragon that loves women and peace more than anything else. No, you probably do. You have made so much miracles because of them. But you know, I think there is another real reason behind it.”

Shiva narrows his eyes and seems like he’s finding it interesting.

“———You like strong individuals, right? Obviously that would include your comrades in them but even if they were your enemy you love to battle the warriors with strong beliefs more than anything. You like to both watch and battle them. The new interest you gained besides women with this last year filled with intense battles is to fight strong men, isn’t it?”

———!

……

……I wonder why. Myself who was seeking for a harem roughly a year ago. About a year has passed since then ———

Even though I want to reject Shiva’s words I can’t bring myself to. No, there is a side of me deep inside me which is approving it.

Yeah, along with lecherous thoughts I ——— was enchanted by “strength” and became crazy about it through that battle with Raiser, the Sitri, Sairaorg-san, and many other strong opponents.

I have come to like defeating strong opponents after intense battle just as liking to grope girls’ breasts———.

It appears Shiva took my silence as an approval and is smiling happily.

Shiva starts patting my back.

“It’s regarding the World Rating Game Tournament which I will be sponsoring. I’m planning to name it after one of the heroes of the War of Evil Dragon and call it “Azazel Cup”. He

did do all the work behind the scene right before it started. Don’t you think it’s a fitting name?”

———Azazel Cup. That’s the name of the World Rating Game Tournament.

Shiva continues further.

“———The strong men you like so much will also be appearing. Many of those warriors that likes you so much. All of those who exchanged fists with you would be participating. Seeing that, are you going to stand at the side line while biting your nails?”

Mahabali also says it straight to me.

“I am also participating. And if you are as well then let’s definitely duel. I understood it today after meeting you. ———With you I can have a fight which I cannot ask for more.”

Never though even a God would ask me. Just how many people are seeking for me?

———Then Shiva moves his gaze to the door.

“Don’t you have anything to say? The Assasin-san sent from Śakra.”

———!

Everyone becomes alert at Shiva’s words. There is a assasin sent by Śakra standing behind the door!? I didn’t notice that at all! So you are telling me that the assasin has been eavesdropping on us!?

The one who appears by opening the door is——— Cao Cao! C-Certainly this guy may be a assasin sent from Śakra but I never expected him to show up!

Cao Cao says it as he shrugs his shoulder.

“My apologies, Shiva-sama. I had no intention of hiding but I didn’t want to interupt your discussion.”

“Fufufu, you’ve come to see Sekiryuutei, right?”

Cao Cao answwers “Yes” to Shiva’s question.

Cao Cao says it after moving his eyes to me.

“Who would ever though even Shiva-sama would become fond of you. Seriously, you are continuing to grow everytime I meet you.”

“Never thought you would come too. Did you come to see my promotion ceremony? Though you are not the type of person to say congratulation.”

“You are right. I came to observe your promotion ritual on behalf of Śakra. Though I thought it was a good opportunity. There is something I need to tell you.”

Cao Cao says it with a heroic face.

“I will obviously participate in the tournament as well. I got a permission from Śakra as well. I’m going challange myself to see how far my power will go together with my team I prepared. And if my wish which is to have a rematch with all of you gets fulfilled then I can’t ask for more.”

Cao Cao turns around and says it as he turns his back on me.

“———The High-class Devil, Hyoudou Issei. I really do want to crush your team down head on. I am always yearning for you and Vali.”

Saying just that, Cao Cao leaves.

.....

……Damn, I mean seriously. All of these guys are……!

Those who speaks to me ——— are high in battle spirits and are observing me. Furthermore, this God called Shiva, the Prince of Asura, Cao Cao, and Raiser aren’t looking at me as Rias’s servant but are looking at me directly———.

……There is this emotion building inside me.

———The World Tournament where the strong will gather. And my own team, huh.

Then the thing Shiva said to me swirls inside me.

———You like strong individuals, right?

……Yeah, I sure do! There are just too many awesome guys around me that takes my attention, that makes me want to aim for them, and that makes me want to surpass them!

I grip really hard. The fire which has lit the fuse of my heart is getting even stronger.

After Cao Cao left it seems like Shiva and Mahabali finished their business so they left the scene together with Beelzebub-sama———.

There were continuous appearances of unexpected guests. All of us have calmed down and headed home after the party.

I look out the window while on our way home by train.

……I then see the sight of the stadium we passed by when we came here.

……That place will also become the stadium of the game.

All these frustration is building inside me————

My own team————

The warriors that appears in front of me are all seeking for me————.

I have become a High-class Devil————.

I am Rias’s [Pawn] but ———— I am a [King] as well.

……

……It’s not just your regular Rating Game. It’s a World Tournament type……

……To not participate while all of those guys I know are participating……

————There’s no way I’ll let that happen!

The fight against him. And the fight against him as well. Having that taken away from me by someone else is frustrating me even more.

Can I allow myself to simply stand and watch the guys I’ve fought lose against someone else besides me!?

————I then realised that I have stood in a new start line once again.

Myself who feels as though my burning soul is about to burn my body. But then there are those who approached me.

———It’s Asia, Xenovia, and Ravel.

All three of them have a determined look.

Xenovia then says it heroically.

“……Ise, I have made up my mind.”

Asia also nods to her words strongly.

“Yes, I am the same as Xenovia-san. I will follow the path Ise-san chose. ———I am your [Bishop].”

Ravel then asks me fearlessly.

“Now then, Ise-sama. Isn’t there something in your mind which had been stimulated?”

……Geez, all of you knows me very well……

“……Asia, Xenovia, and Ravel. Can you listen to what I have to say for a bit?”

I———then shared my thoughts to my first ever peerage ———

It begins feast

Around a bit after Rias-neesan’s graduation when it entered the Summer holiday———

All of us that had an express tour starting from the Hokkaido located at the North down to Okinawa located in the South for the graduation tour. It was a tour filled with many kind of emotions, but I’ll use another occasion to talk about that.

During such tour, on the morning of the final day when we were at Okinawa when we all woke up ——— Ise-kun, Asia-san, Xenovia, Irina-san, Ravel-san, and Rossweisse-san had already left the hotel in Naha.

Rias-neesan who found that out sighed in astonishment.

“……To behave like, no, to make action like a [King]. It sure is like him.”

Yes, during the holiday no matter how much spree he stirred, he must have left the hotel with the right attitude.

Rias-neesan looks out to the blue ocean from the window of the hotel room as she stroke her red hair back.

“Now then. We should also start making plans for the tournament. Obviously after we eat our breakfast, that is.”

And so, the feast begins quietly———

What will begin now is an intense feast to find out who is the “strongest” among all of those rivals we have met till now as well as those strong foes we would be meeting from now.

Life.3 Gremory’s Graduation Ceremony

On the day of the graduation———

On that day, Rias woke up early as usual and started to put her uniform on as usual.

However———this will be the last time she will be wearing it as a high school student. She said she wanted to head to school before others finds out so she went to school while taking Akeno-san with her.

———She says it to me as well.

“Ise, you come with us as well.”
Rias, Akeno-san, and I head to school with just the three of us. On our way there Akeno-san grabs my arm so there was a situation where Rias competes with her by taking my other arm. It’s like usual. But from tomorrow, this won’t be happening anymore. When I think about that……I start to feel sad.

The Kuou Academy where no one is here yet……or that’s what I thought anyway. Two familiar faces are standing at the school gate and are cleaning the area.

“Oh, Rias, Akeno, and Ise-kun. How are all of doing?”

Oh man, the former student president Sona and the former student vice-president Shinra are cleaning the school gate with a broom! Wow, I never imagined there would be

someone who would come to school earlier than Rias and Akeno-san……

The former president then says.

“Ufufu, I couldn’t help myself but to wake up early today. There wasn’t anything I could do at home so I decided to come a bit early to start cleaning here. Then I found Tsubaki here……”

“Yes, for some reason I woke up early today of all days……”

So the four graduates ended up waking early huh. Rias, Akeno-san, the former student president, and the former student vice-president starts to laugh.

After saying good bye to the former student president and the former student vice-president, the place we headed to wasn’t the school building but the old school building. ——— We are on our way to the ORC room.

The three of us enter the room.

The view of the clubroom which is no different than usual. Even though Rias and Akeno-san hasn’t been showing up that much, we still continued to use it normally. We can’t suddenly become pathetic just because the seniors left after all.

This place is……a room which Rias and others rebuilt.

Rias goes to the club president’s desk slowly.

“Ufufu, I will make some tea then.”

Akeno-san starts to boil water like usual.

Rias sits on the club-president's chair. It really has been a while seeing this view. Right now it is Asia who is sitting on that chair. I feel bad for Asia but it certainly does suit Rias better sitting on that chair.

Rias then says.

"……It was just the two of us until Yuuto and others joined here, wasn't it, Akeno?"

"Yes. We went around the academy in order to preserve this club somehow. Even though we lacked in number of members."

Akeno-san starts to chuckle.

"Even still, we couldn't increase members if we take in account about our identity…… Did you know, Ise? That at the beginning Sona and Tsubaki came here frequently? That's why it wasn't unexpectedly lonely at all."

"That was something we could do only at that time."

Hmm, it's my first time hearing that. So when Rias was in her first year, the former student president and the former student vice-president came here where the four of them spent their time here quite often.

"Even a year after that, the only person to join our club was just Yuuto and even still we only had three members. That boy was very formal and considerate with us than he needed to be because he was a year below us."

"He sure did come here before both of us arrived and was cleaning this place. He did things from cleaning the floors to cleaning the windows and he even went so far to clean the whole old school building. ……Even though it was only the

three of us using this place. I am quite sure that Yuuto-kun was working really hard because he wanted us to use this place to our heart’s content.”

……That Kiba had a time where he acted like that when he was a first year, huh. With his personality it won’t surprise me he would act that way. He adores Rias and Akeno-san like his older sister more than anyone———

“……It really was a shock when we became a third year. When we thought the only new members were only going to be Koneko and Gasper———there were Ise, Asia, Xenovia, Irina, and Ravel that joined this club while Azazel and Rossweisse who became the supervisor of this club. Fufu, we increased the number of people all at once.”

“Ufufu, now we won’t have anyone question our club due to the lack of members anymore.”

Yeah. More people started to join after I came here. ……I don’t know about the club when they lacked in numbers so I can’t imagine what’s it like to have just two or three people.

This is quite a big old school building. ……So it was too big for them I guess.

From there Rias became silent. That’s because she is looking around the room with such sad and loving eyes———

But Rias is also laughing as if she found it funny.

“……Though we will continue to use this place for Devil’s work from tomorrow as well. Rather than separating from this place for eternity, we will be using this place more frequently from now on. ……Though I do feel really sad that I won’t be able to visit this place after school as a student anymore.”

“……These three years, it sure does feel like it was short, hasn’t it, Rias?”

“……For a Devil’s life, three-years is just an instance. ———— But.”

“ “It sure was a good time.” ”

Both of them says the same thing at the same time with the same tone.

The two of them starts to laugh.

Akeno-san then says.

“This experience will be my eternal treasure. Rias, thank you for inviting me to this place. I really enjoyed my time here.”

She gives me and Rias a black tea she just made and then said that. ————There are tears in her eyes.

Rias says it as she lifts her cup.

“I am also glad that I invited you here. You have my thanks for supporting me this far as my club vice-president. And please do take care of me from now on as well, Akeno. My [Queen], as well my best friend……”

Rias makes the brightest smile she can.

It sure does make me think that there are times which only these two can share.

Rias then says it to me.

“The story of the past of me and Akeno. I wanted to share it with you so that’s why we brought you here with us. But it seems like we need to share it with others as well.”

That’s because we started hearing noisy footsteps.

The one who comes in by opening the door is ——— the other members! It seems like they came chasing after us since they somehow predicted this. It seems like Kiba and Gasper also got a call from them so they are with them as well.

Irina then says.

“Geez! Rias-san, Akeno-san, and Ise-kun! You came here while keeping it a secret from us!”

Rossweisse-san came rushing in with her formal uniform.

“Please don’t leave me, your supervisor, behind!”

Kiba then says it with a smile.

“How about we do the final club activity with the members here? Even just having a talk sounds fine.”

The remaining students and Rossweisse-san also responded by saying “sounds good!”.

Rias and Akeno-san looks at each other and bursts in laughter.

“Yeah, I guess I will have all of you tag along with Akeno and my final ORC activity till the time for our graduation ceremony. Akeno, please make tea for everyone as well.”

“Oh my. Understood, Buchou.”

Like this, we are told of the past story of Rias and Akeno-san till the time allowed us———

It was really fun since we are told of an embarrassing story of Kiba and Gasper.

……This may be the last time Rias and Akeno-san comes here in their uniform.

But ——— even from now, we will always be together.

And furthermore, they will always be Rias-buchou and Akeno-fukubuchou to us.

It happens right before the ceremony.

When we came walking out from the classroom and are walking on the corridor which leads to gymnasium. I get a glimpse of someone talking to Rias.

Oh my! It’s Sairaorg-san!

“So you came, Sairaorg.”

“Congratulation on graduating, Rias. It is my cousins and my peers’ important graduation after all. Let me congratulate all of you today.”

I run towards them and talked to them.

“Sairaorg-san!”

I run towards them while waving my hand. But Sairaorg-san smiles at seeing me and then says;

“Hyoudou Issei, behave more elegantly. You are a High-class Devil after all.”

“Y-Yes. Though I still don’t get the feeling that I am one.”

“Fu, you will eventually. That’s what a real man is.”
When we are having such discussion, Rias gets called by another graduate: “Rias-san, it’s about time we return to the classroom once.” Rias also responds by saying, “Yes, thank you.”

“Then Ise, Sairaorg. I will be heading off then. Thank you for coming today.”

Just saying that, Rias goes inside the school building.

Sairaorg-san and myself that are left behind.

Sairaorg-san then says it to me.

“I couldn’t say it last time since it was your important ritual…… But I am also planning to participate in the tournament.”

“Yes, I knew you would.”

Or else it wouldn’t be like Sairaorg-san at all. It’s the tournament where all the strong people and Gods will be gathering at. There is no reason for him to not participate.

Sairaorg-san then smirks.

“It’s those guys that we are talking about. They must have sent you a declare of challenge. It isn’t hard to imagine at all.”

“Well, I did have all these people sending me their words.”

……Yeah, there were Vali, Saji, Raiser, Shiva, Mahabali, and Cao Cao that spoke to me about it,

Sairaorg-san says it again straight to my face.

“I don’t like to say it in a vague way so let me say it clearly. ———Participate in the tournament. No matter in what way. I don’t know if I can have a rematch with you and Rias, but knowing you two will participate will burn up my passion. Even if our opponent may be a God, the intense days of battle which you and I overcome won’t be a vain. Hyoudou Issei, I shall be waiting for you.”

Just saying that, Sairaorg-san walks towards the gymnasium as one of the guests.

……I know, Sairaorg-san.

……I have already made up my mind!

I crunch my fist. But right now I am a student who needs to send of the graduates. I walk into the gymnasium with a clear mind———

And then the graduation ceremony begins———

As there are claps from the current students and the guardians, the graduates enter the gymnasium.

I become curious and look at where the guardians are sitting.

A crimson-haired gentleman with a digital camera in one of his hand appears within my sight. Ah, it’s Rias’s dad! Next to him is Rias’s mom. She looks young! Other guardian probably thinks that she is Rias’s older sister or something.

Barakiel-san is also here……and he’s already crying so much where he has things coming from his nose. And he’s obviously recording this with his digital camera. …… Barakiel-san, the ceremony just started. Ah, Akeno-san who is walking at the centre of the gymnasium sees Barakiel-san

and has her face turn red! She must be embarrassed since her dad is in tears already……

I wonder what will happen to Barakiel-san when Akeno receives her certificate or when she sings the graduation song……

Ah, a silver-haired woman! Grayfia-san is also sitting a bit away from them. ……It’s been awhile since I last saw Grayfia-san. Oh, and next to her is a crimson-haired boy ——— Milicas! Maybe they came here on behalf of Sirzechs-sama.

And so the ceremony begins by the national anthem, the school anthem, and then it ended with the passing of their certificate.

Xenovia who is the student president comes up to the stage to represent the current student to give their farewell to the graduates by giving her speech.

I would never have imagined this scene where Xenovia would give her thanks to the graduates. You wouldn’t imagine her in this situation when you first met her or when she was the member of our club.

[The formal reply from the graduates will be made by their representative, Shitori Souna-san.]

“Yes.”

Then the former president gets called over for the formal reply from the graduates where she comes up to the stage.

[Today at March where the smells of Spring would float, we will adventure out from this school.]

The former president who stood at the stage started with such greetings and then starts to give her thanks for all of those involved in this ceremony.

She spoke from her memory when she was a first year till events which left strong impression to her.

[We experienced by having many kind of meetings in the past three years……as well as separation. The experience we had by meeting many people in this place will definitely become an irreplaceable memory to us. And also with those we separated from———]

The former president stopped her words for a moment there. There is a single tear drop falling from her eye.

[……I would like to move forward while believing that we will meet with those who we separated from one day in the future. I believe showing them how much we have matured when we reunite with them will be the most important thing.]

……I can understand that is her reply from thinking about Serafall-sama and others that weren’t able to come here.

Yeah, it’s exactly like what the former president said. We need to move forward while believing that we will definitely meet them again and need to show them how much we have matured when we reunite with them.

That’s the most important thing———

[———From the third-year representative, Shitori Souna.]

After she bows her head down she receives many applauses.

Like this, the graduation proceeds forward quietly where we sent off the graduates———.

The third year who has just finished their ceremony———

Those who are smiling. Those who are in tears. Those who are embracing each other. Those who are taking picture together. There are many different responses.

Among those students, Rias and Akeno-san who has finished their ceremony goes past the school gate while carrying the cylindrical container with the certificate inside it.

The one who awaits them are us, the ORC members. We need to take Rias and Akeno-san to a place where they won't be seen much by the other students.

As the ceremony has ended there is something I want to tell Rias. It's an important issue. Something important for the both of us———.

But before that there are those who needs to say something to her,

It's the three of Kiba, Koneko, and Gasper. The truth is I had been consulting with these three. That's why I will give my all in helping them. More like, do it guys!

I push the three of them and make them face Rias.

"First of all, the three of Kiba, Koneko-chan, and Gasper wants say something. Hurry, you three have made up your mind already, haven't you?"

Kiba, Koneko-chan, and Gasper stands in front of Rias and have a nervous look.

“Y-Yeah. U-Umm……congratulation on your graduation.”

“Congratulation.”

“Congratulation!”

It’s rare to see Kiba turn this red and make a panicked voice. Well, I can understand the reason why after hearing it from them. But these three are the ones who said they want to do it so then they need to become brave and do it.

“Yes, thank you, Yuuto, Koneko, Gasper.”

Rias smiles happily.

But Kiba continues while feeling shy.

“S-Since……you have……already graduated……from Kuou academy high school division and retired from being the club president of ORC……”

Rias starts to chuckle at seeing Kiba and the other two acting a bit confused.

“Geez, Yuuto, Koneko, Gasper. What is it? The three of you aren’t acting like you usually do. You need to tell me clearly of what you are trying to say————”

Then the three of them says it while interrupting Rias’s words.

“————Rias-neesan.”

Koneko-chan and Gasper continues after Kiba’s bold act.

“R, Rias-neesama……”

“R, Rias, o-oneechan~!”

Rias who is at the centre of attention gets shocked the moment they said that and froze.

It must have been something she didn't anticipate.

"We thought it would fit better to call you in such way rather than calling you Buchou……"

Yes, that's what they consulted me and other girls about. As Rias and Akeno-san's graduation approached us, we were called by those three regarding how they should address Rias.

Rias will be graduating and she will officially resign from being a "Buchou". It would be weird to call her the former club president, hence the reason why they used their courage to make such determination.

Hearing their determination, the new ORC consisted of Asia, Xenovia, Irina, Ravel, Rossweisse-san, and myself motivated them to do it by saying "You guys must do it!"

And so, Rias who was called in such way———

"……"
She is silently shedding her tears and is covering her face with her hand.

Kiba and the other two panics at her sudden change.

"U-Umm, was it weird!? Were we impolite!?"

"W-We are sorry!"

"S-Sorry~!"

Kiba, Koneko-chan, and Gasper who apologises to her. But Rias shakes her head to the side.

Rias wipes her tears with her finger but it doesn’t stop her from shedding more tears.

“……No, that’s not it. It’s because I’m so happy……. I never thought I would hear words which would make me more emotional than the ceremony once I passed through the school gate.”

She must really be happy. Rias is simply shedding her tears.

She really must have wanted them to call her that way. Rias thinks her peerage as her family. She saw these three as her younger brothers and younger sister.

That’s why she must have wanted them to call her like that.

After Rias calms herself down she says it to these three with a naughty look.

“Call me that one more time.”

“ “ “Eh?” ” ”

The three of them are dumbfounded by her sudden words. She says it again while putting her ears towards them.

“Oh, you won’t call me that then?”
Kiba, Koneko-chan, and Gasper turns red again and says it with courage.

“Ah, umm……Rias-neesan……”

“……Rias-neesama.”

“……O-Oneechan.”
“Ufufufu, this sure does make me happy.”
Rias becomes so happy that she starts skipping on the spot.

Yeah, she really must have wanted them to call her that way. It really must have been an amazing surprise.

Seeing this, Akeno-san says it to them in a teasing manner.

“Oh my, I want to be called Oneechan as well.”

Kiba says it with a troubled look.

“We think of you as our older sister as well……but it’s become so fitting to call you Akeno-san both at private and public times……”

The good-looking guy is acting like a younger brother fitting his age……no, more like younger than his age. The former student vice-president Shinra……No, Shinra-senpai will also have blood bursting from her nose if she sees this.

“W-We will call you it one day! But our heart was already at its limit by preparing to say Rias-oneechan~!”

Everyone burst in laughter after hearing Gasper’s words.

Well, I guess time will solve the way they address Akeno-san. ……Yeah, it sure does feel like its peaceful. Maybe the Great Red and Ophis inside me are being very satisfied at seeing this.

……Now then, I guess it’s my turn then.

I take a step forward to Rias.

“Can I also say something?”

“Sure, so what do you want to say, Ise?”

I continue while scratching my cheek.

“Umm……there’s one thing I made up my mind about. Once you graduated, you will no longer be the Buchou of this ORC nor will you be the student of this division, so that’s why I wanted to make a proper decision and……”

What I made my mind about ——— is my usual conversation with Rias.

To be honest, I was a bit troubled in the way we had talk to each other. I know inside my head that during our private times I need to talk to her without being formal or without creating a gap between our social standing since we are dating.

But the situation around us has been hectic where we had to go the Underworld, the Heaven, and the country of Vampires……where we met all sort of people and there were times we had to talk to VIP people. And everytime we encounter such situation, our public life and private life gets mixed up and there are times where the way I talk to her gets mixed up as well.

———Right now I am confused in how I should talk to Rias.

But I thought being confused by it when I’m dating Rias would be bad. So I felt I need to make a proper decision definitely.

That’s why her graduation ceremony was a good occasion.

Yeah, I shall act like it from today. The relation between me and Rias———

I say it to her straightforward. In order to show my manly side———

“Rias, congrats on graduating. From today, I am hoping I can talk to you casually. My own graduation from talking formally to you……I guess. There will be times when I need to speak in formal manner to you at public as you are my Master. But apart from that, I am hoping I can talk to you in a casual manner like this at other times.”

Rias makes a big smile. She then grabs my hand and shows how happy she is.

“Yes, I’m so happy to hear that. Today really was the best graduation!”

I’m so glad.

The others and myself made a certain determination today and it feels like we can enter a new relation with her.

Yeah, that is why I should tell her about it right now.

“And there is more thing I need all of you to hear.”

I make eye-contact with Asia, Ravel, and Xenovia. They gather around me. I say it after confirming that.

“———I will also be participating in the Rating Game tournament with my own team. Asia, Xenovia, and Ravel are determined to follow me.”

I revealed my thought to Asia, Xenovia, and Ravel on that day when we were returning from my high-class promotion ceremony when we were inside the train.

They accepted my thought gladly.

I couldn’t help it. I couldn’t resist the flame ignited inside me.

If this was an ordinary Rating Game then I would have happily participated as Rias's [Pawn]. But due to several factors such as the world tournament, the requirement to participate in it, and the words passed on to me from my rivals, I turned into a state where I couldn't resist participating since the "manly" passion inside me was burning.

I'm going to create my own team so I can fight those guys ———.

I ask Rias straightforward.

"Will you allow me to participate, Rias?"

Rias put on a courageous look and nods her head.

"Yes, of course. Since you have become a High-class Devil, there will be no way you could decline Sairaorg and Vali's request."

Yeah, I knew you would say that……! You always watched over me while standing next to me. And she' my important benefactor, my master, and my lover who has led me this far!

Akeno-san, Kiba, Koneko-chan, and Gasper gathers around Rias.

Rias then says it front of my team.

"———I will also participate. As I am going to officially participate in the Rating Game in the future, the upcoming event will be a good opportunity. No matter what result we get, participating in it will be a great experience for us. Even if that means that we have to fight you———"

Yes, as the rule goes it is possible for us to fight each other. This is indeed the factor you would rarely be able to experience in your average Rating Game.

Rossweisse-san who doesn't know which side she should pick is acting really confused.

Rias then says.

"Rossweisse."

"Y-Yes, what is it, Rias-san?"

"You would be going to Ise's team as well."
[———!?]

Everyone becomes shocked at her words! It was natural for Asia, Xenovia, and Ravel to be in my team since they have told me that they wanted to since before.

But it's not like I made such promise with Rossweisse-san so it wouldn't be weird if she stayed in Rias's team.

"You would be a able to fill the hole by going to Ise's team rather than staying in my team."

"B-But, Rias-san! E-Even still, I am your servant and———"

Rossweisse-san turned into a Devil in a rush, but now she is feeling grateful to Rias from bottom of her heart and is now one of the important members of Rias Gremory's peerage. Rossweisse-san is also feeling proud of that fact.

Rias hugs Rossweisse-san gently and then says this gently.

"Yes, you are my precious servant. However, I believe that you will be able to release all of your potential the most by serving under Ise. And Ise will also be needing your help. He

will need your strength more than me. I believe that your magic will become Ise’s support. I didn’t bring you up in the trade several days ago, but still, Rossweisse, I want you to help Ise.”

Rossweisse-san hugs Rias while having tears in her eyes.

Rias then says.

“Didn’t I say that this isn’t going to be an eternal farewell before? From a large perspective the members here are all Rias Gremory’s peerage, you know? My comrades and my family. It’s just that we may happen to be competing with each other sometimes. We are family that will continue to live together tomorrow and even the day after tomorrow.”

“Uuu~! Rias-saaaaaan~! I! I will help Ise-kun, don’t ya worry! Watch over me with warms eyes, will yaaaa~!”

Ah man, her accent is back……

I see. So Rossweisse-san will also be coming to me———

But, I wonder if that’s okay? I look at Rias’s face after feeling worried. Perhaps she read through my mind so this is what she says.

“I am also exploring my own team. One of the fixation is to build a new team while having the old ORC members is the centre of it. Though the one I’m planning right now will be for the upcoming tournament.”

So ——— a new team which has the old ORC members as the core of it, huh.

Rias continues.

“……After meeting Ise, I have encountered many situations and have met with all sorts of people. That may have been destiny, but what triggered it is the meeting with Ise and Asia. From then on, I have met people starting from Xenovia. That is really important to me. But somewhere inside me is telling me it was something which was brought by Ise who is the Sekiryuutei.”

“No, Rias that is———”

That isn’t it! This is all destiny! It’s not just me, but I think those were the destiny which was attracted by you!

It seems like Rias understand that too, so she continues by interrupting my words.

“I know what you want to say. If I start think too seriously about it in such ways, then I would be devaluing myself. That’s why I have got rid of such thinking out of my head and concluded that everything because it had to happen. But you know, planning a new team with the original ORC members as the centre of it definitely seemed interesting. More rather, simply imagining it would take my interest. I am positive there is a team which is possible to plan by using all the battle experience we had as a reference. ———How can I defeat Sairaorg’s team, Sona’s team, and Vali team……? I wasn’t able to go to sleep by simply imagining it. Being able to have such imagination is what the upcoming tournament is.”

———That is true.

I couldn’t help but feel my dream and ambition of making my own team freely which is accordingly to the upcoming tournament’s rule. I ended up thinking all the time for what I would need to do in order for me team to defeat Vali’s team and Cao Cao’s team.

Perhaps the thing Rias has been writing on my desk at night before the ceremony as she got out of my bed means…… that she was coming up with a team for the tournament!

Irina raises her hand when Rias and I spoke of what was going in our minds.

“U-Umm…… This is a good occasion so can you guys listen to me for a sec?”

Saying that she continues.

“Currently there are teams organized for the tournament which is mainly consisted of the Reincarnated Angels. The team which has the Joker as the [King] has begun being formed. But I’m planning to decline from joining that team.”

Irina looks at my way. She has determined eyes.

“———I want to join Ise-kun’s team.”

[———!?]

Everyone becomes shocked at her words! If Irina who isn’t a Devil or my servant says that then everyone here will be shocked!

Irina then continues.

“It is something I decided on my own which I kept it a secret from others ever since when Ise-kun’s High-class promotion ceremony ended. Even the higher-ups are fine if it’s Ise-kun and they are even supportive of it.”

Irina who looks up the sky.

“Everyone in Heaven is important to me. I haven’t forgotten my faith. There isn’t a day where I don’t think about the lord

and Michael-sama. ———But the feeling of wanting to fight alongside Xenovia and Asia-san in a big competition like this was also strong. At the end, I couldn’t let go off that feeling.”

She walks towards my team and then stands besides me. She then shouted out from her heart.

“I-I……want to be honest with the feeling of love inside me and live like that! That’s why I want to fight as a part of Ise-kun’s team!”

……Irina. You are that determined to come to my team……

“If Irina is willing to come then I can’t ask for a more strong support. ———Will you join my team?”

When I ask her, she replies with a big smile.

“Yes, of course! Darling!”

Irina jumps into where Asia and Xenovia are.

“Xenovia! Asia-san! Once again, please take care of me!”

“Sure, Irina! You and I are eternal swordswoman pair! And with Asia————”

“Yes! The team of this three is unbeatable!”

The three of Irina, Xenovia, and Asia are hugging each other and starts spinning around together.

So Irina and Rossweisse-san are now in my team…… Looks like I need to discuss about the team with Ravel from the scratch.

Now then. I have discussed my relation with Rias and the Rating Game tournament.

This is the final stunt. The man, Hyoudou Issei’s biggest and the most important shining moment! I decided that I will tell Rias once she graduates!

I take Rias’s hand and then tell her.

“I want to tell you something last which is really important.”

“……What is it?”

I then tell her directly!

“One day, I will be able to stand beside you equally……more like, I will achieve a social standing equal to you. I want us to become a pair which would be called fitting from anyone’s perspective as the same High-class Devil. What I want to say is———in the future I want you to lead the same life as me.”

———The promise of the future.

I decided to tell her once I become a High-class Devil. I decided I will tell Rias once it is her graduation.

That’s why I told her. I told her, god dammmmmmmmmmmit!

It seems like this was something really unexpected for Rias.

“———!”

Seems like she has a feeling she can’t express by words.

She turns all red, and then———

“……Yes!”

……! She gave me her answer!!

The promise of our futureeeeee!!

She gave me her consennnnnnnnnnnt!!

[Ooooooooooooooooooooooooooo~!!]

Everyone becomes so hyped that they start shouting.

“Alrighhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhht!”

I scream at the spot and shouted my joy by full throttle!

Azazel-sensei! I did ittttttt!

I! I will polish myself as a manlier man and definitely will become a man who is suited for Rias, oh yes I wiii

“……”

The two of them couldn’t understand what they were told for a moment. But it appears they know it’s real after they looked at Rias and my face where Rias even nodded her head.

“

“Eeee

[Yeah, of course. As long as Albion and Vali Lucifer participating in the tournament, then there is no reason for me, no, there is no reason for us to not appear.]

You’re right about that. I won’t allow Vali to lose against someone besides me.

———Wait for me, Vali. Wait for me, my rivals!

Life.4 The Opening Ceremony of the Rating Game World Tournament, the “Azazel Cup”!

Part 1

It was already slightly past mid-April—.

After school, I — Kiba Yuuto started our club activities in the club room.

“Today’s activity is an investigative report on the Youkai.”

Asia-buchou had given us this task and we were now presenting the results of our report. Koneko-chan distributed a copy of the report to everyone, which was compiled from the information that all of us had previously researched and summarised. As new first year students, Le Fay-san and Bennia-san began to read it with great interest since they were also new members.

“So there are also Youkai in this town, but I wonder what kind of Youkai they are.”

« There are many things that I do not know. From my knowledge, there should be a high variance in their appearance. »

Both of them seemed to fit in to Kuoh Academy’s uniform very well.

“Umu! I will join you as well! If it’s about Youkai, then you can leave it to me!”

It was Kunou-san, who had come over to visit us after the primary school classes had ended. She had moved into the Hyoudou household starting from this Spring, and then officially enrolled into Kuoh Academy’s primary school. Because she had to mingle with humans, her ears and tails were usually concealed, just like Koneko-chan’s. There was also a new face in the club room—.

“…Umm, Isaiah. How do I read this kanji?”

Tosca asked me as she looked at the report. I immediately taught her how to pronounce it with

“This is—”

Indeed, Tosca had also transferred into Kuoh Academy’s middle school division. Although there were many areas that she was unfamiliar with, her new life was slowly, yet surely beginning. She was also able to come here to visit us after school. She was able learn a lot more at school, experience so many more things, and laugh more as well, so I was happy for her. Of course, your middle school uniform also suits you, Tosca. Like this, there were new members who joined our newly restructured club during the new school term. However, there were several members who were absent today. Kunou threw a gaze at the vacant seat.

“Ise and the others haven’t come yet huh.”

Kunou-san’s mumbled words revealed a trace of loneliness. Indeed, Ise-kun hadn’t yet come today. Likewise, Ravel-san wasn’t here either. Asia-san apologised to her.

“I’m sorry Kunou-san, Ise-san is—”

“I understand. —He’s preparing for the Tournament, right?”

Indeed, just as Kunou-san said, as the leader of his team – the [King], he was constantly recruiting members for the Rating Game World Tournament, as well as training his team since the beginning of the Spring break. It was because of that that he was late today. Asia-san and Xenovia originally wanted to accompany him, but both of them were unable to be absent due to their positions. Ise-kun had also said to them

“You two absolutely must be there as the Kaichou and Buchou [1].”

Then again, tomorrow was going to be the opening day of the Rating Game World Tournament. Time is running out, Ise-kun. Although our team doesn’t have you, what’s surprising is that we’re not only completely prepared, but everything has gone so smoothly that it’s hard to believe. —At that time, the sound of rushing footsteps came from the corridor. The door was forcefully pushed open as Ise-kun and Ravel-san made their way in.

“We’re late! Sorry!”

Wow, despite how busy he was, he still came for the club activities, as expected of Ise-kun.

“Well then, let’s all go over the report once more.”

After they heard that from me, the activity of the new Occult Research Club with all its members present officially began. The third years consisted of the Buchou Asia-san, me as the Fukubuchou, Ise-kun, Irina-san, as well as Xenovia who occasionally dropped by. The second years consisted of Koneko-chan, Gasper-kun, and Ravel-san. The new first years were Le Fay-san and Bennia-san. There were also our

preliminary members consisting of Tosca from the middle school, and Kunou from the primary school. After Rias-neesan and Akeno-san left the Occult Research Club that they reconstructed, our members began their activities, and it became splendid and lively again—. But, Rias-neesan and Akeno-san occasionally come here in the afternoon from the university after their lectures have ended. Well, tomorrow is going to be the opening ceremony of the Rating Game World Tournament. After our activities, Koneko-chan, Gasper-kun and I will have to join Rias-neesan and the others for a strategy meeting. Ise-kun, I'm looking forward to it. Your new team!

Part 2

And so, although that was what I was looking forward to yesterday, when it came to the day of the opening ceremony, none of Ise-kun's team members had arrived yet. It was just before the opening ceremony was about to begin. In front of us, Rias Gremory's Team, was the enormous stadium that the opening ceremony would be conducted in. It had been newly constructed within the Maous' territory of the Underworld for the purpose of the Tournament. The size of the facility was beyond belief, and if it was compared to the size of the Tokyo Dome [2], its width would be greater by at least ten times. Helicopters had begun filming from above the stadium and there were media cameras set up everywhere within the stadium, as it would not only be broadcast live throughout the entire Underworld, but also across every faction. The audience was composed of visitors of every faction who had come here today so it was full to the brim. Those of us who were contestants had all gathered in the centre of the enormous Game Field. Not only were there the Devils that the Rating Game originated from, there were also Angels, Fallen Angels, Humans, Youkai, and many

other races. There were even God-class beings amongst them.

With Rias-neesan acting as the [King], the rest of our team included Akeno-san, Koneko-chan, Gasper-kun, our newly added members, and myself. The person who seemed a bit overwhelmed by seeing a crowd of so many other players was — Valerie-san.

“There sure are a lot of people.”

“Valerie, don’t leave my side.”

Gasper-kun was tightly holding on to Valerie-san’s hand out of fear that she would get lost if she left his side. Indeed, a new member of ours was Valerie-san. Naturally, she was not participating as one of Rias Gremory’s servant Devils, but as a non-servant member of our team in this tournament.

“Oh dear me, there are people everywhere I look.”

The person who spoke was a cloaked girl who had put the edge of her hand against her forehead as she gazed out into the distance. The girl’s white and black streaked hair was tied up above her head. The cloaked girl said to Koneko-chan

“It seems like there are more than a thousand teams participating. If memory serves, it was one thousand and forty five. That said, it seems like not all team members will be present here.”

“Nonetheless, the presence of more people doesn’t make a difference to me.”

The girl revealed a faint smile as she said that. I asked the girl

“Is it your first time at a large event venue like this? —Lint-san.”

“Well, it is the first time for me. After all, I’ve been in the training facilities affiliated with the warriors’ training institution for a long time. No, but there are simply humans humans humans, Devils Devils Devils, Fallen Angels, Angels Angels, and occasionally even Gods? Really, I wonder what is going on here?”

Lint Selzan’s tone was completely light-hearted. The new Gremory Team also had another new member. She had been added in as a [Knight], like me, to fill in for the vacancy that Xenovia had left behind as a sword-wielder. Details aside, both the Church and the Grigori strongly recommended her, so she became a member of our team. By the way, similarly to Valerie, neither of them are members of Rias Gremory’s peerage. At present, they are simply members who have been invited to our team for the sake of the tournament…. Selzan—. If she was introduced to Ise-kun, he would definitely be so surprised to hear that name that he would be left speechless. After all, even I was rather astounded when I heard of it. After meeting her, I could more or less see that person’s shadow. Their frivolous tone was quite similar, but she wasn’t vulgar in comparison to that person. In fact, our team actually has another new member, our other team member…. But it looks like they aren’t here. Well, whatever, I’ll see them when it comes time for the match anyway…. However, according to that person’s temperament, if the opponent isn’t immensely strong, then they may not show up…. At least after having completed the registration of members, there isn’t a problem even if they don’t show up at the opening ceremony…. Speaking of which, the opening ceremony only requires either the [King] or the [Queen] of a team to attend. In our case, almost all of us are attending.

Now then, I'll briefly explain the general outline of this tournament. The first is eligibility for participation. There aren't any particular restrictions on the participants, and Devils are able to participate in teams that aren't the peerage they belong to. The only one who is essential for the registration is the core of the team, the [King]. As for the rest of the team members, all they have to do is finalise their registrations before the beginning of a match, and at the same time, changes of team members are also allowed. (Although there seems to be a limit as to the number of members who can be changed at a time), but only the [King] cannot be changed. It is also forbidden for players to participate for two different teams. If this is discovered to have occurred, they will be immediately disqualified. There is also a penalty for the teams that the player belonged to. That is to say, team members can be constantly replaced in this tournament, and new members can also be added to the team. Our team still had some vacancies, and it was not complete.

Next are the tournament's rules for team formation. Like the Rating Games, there are at most one of the [King] and [Queen], there are at most two of the [Rook], [Bishop] and [Knight] roles, while there can be a maximum of eight [Pawn] positions. This caps the maximum number of team members at sixteen. Players are registered according to their respective roles. As mentioned earlier, the composition of a team is not restricted, so the [King] is able to register their players to roles in accordance with their preferences. Although a Devil might have originally been a [Knight], it is also permitted for them to participate as a [Rook] in this tournament. According to the original [Evil Pieces] and the rules of the Rating Game, the value and number of pieces used to turn someone into their servant varies based on their natural qualities and abilities. But, this concept has practically been abolished under the rules of the current

tournament. The special characteristics of each of the chess pieces will activate at the beginning of a match. Even for people who aren't using the Evil Pieces, as long as they are registered as a [Knight], they will gain the characteristic of increased speed at the beginning of a match. As for the Devils who use the Evil Pieces, if they are registered under a different piece from their original, their inherent piece's characteristics will be overridden by their tournament piece's characteristics at the beginning of a match.

For example, if I were to participate as a [Rook], then I would lose the characteristics of my [Knight] piece during a match, and instead gain the characteristics of a [Rook] piece. This was what I thought were one of the most interesting rules of this competition. Secondly, the concept of a pawn piece's value had been invalidated in this tournament. Even if a servant originally possessed multiple pieces, it would become equivalent to having one unless they were a God-class being. A simple example would be Kuroka, who possesses two [Bishop] pieces, but according to the rules of this tournament, she is counted as having only one. That's why it would be possible for Vali to register both Kuroka and Le Fay-san as his bishops.

For those who are God-class beings, a single God-class being takes up two of the [Rook], [Knight], or [Bishop] pieces. For those who are regarded as powerful Gods, if they were considered in a one-to-one ratio with others, the competition would become too unbalanced. As such, under most circumstances, one God-class being is considered as being equivalent to two [Rook], [Knight], or [Bishop] pieces. Of course, for the people whose strength is comparable to that of a God-class being, they are also judged according to this standard. However, there is a limit to the conversion of a piece's value. The limitations for [Pawn] pieces are very strict. It is because a [Pawn] piece can be promoted to a

[Queen] that such limitations are in place. Otherwise, there would be many [King] players who would register their strongest players as [Pawn] pieces, and thus the outcome of the Game would depend entirely on the pawns. If there were eight Ultimate-class Devils registered as [Pawn] pieces, who all then promoted to [Queen], the Game would become rather terrifying. Similarly, when God-class beings are registered as [Pawn] pieces, there are many limitations.

What follows are the so-called ‘basics’, which have essentially been abolished. Even though the number of God-class beings participating is less than ten percent, they are still opponents who cannot be underestimated. Among the Gods participating, the most famous one is Śakra [3]. He is one of the most watched figures. He was also attending the opening ceremony, and occupied a corner of the stadium. There was no one who dared to approach that God. When Śakra announced that he was going to participate, there were many other Gods who gave up on the tournament. He was the leader of the magnificent Four Heavenly Kings — Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Virūḍhaka, Virūpākṣa, Vaiśravaṇa [4]; he had immediately become the most favourable candidate.

“……”

And then there was the one who was staring silently at Śakra, the Prince of the Asuras, Mahabali. He had already entered a state of vigilance, and he seemed ready to unleash the fierce aura that covered his body onto Śakra at the earliest opportunity. And the person standing a slight distance away from him and watching on was—.

“Hohoho, you want to fight it out with the Heavenly Emperor? Don’t worry; it won’t be too late to think about it even when the time comes.”

It was the first generation Sun Wukong, the Victorious Fighting Buddha.

“Hey, monkey, why isn’t this opening ceremony thing starting yet?”

“…Grruu I’m hungry.”

The ones beside him who complained were a bearded elderly man, and an old pig-headed man. They were the first-generation Sha Wujing, Golden-bodied Arhat , and the first-generation Zhu Bajie, Cleaner of the Altars.

“Aahhh, aahhh, why do I have to join you as well!?”

Whilst on the other side, a miniature Eastern Dragon was weeping — Yu-Long. In order to suit the opening ceremony, he had reduced his own size.

“……”

The person who sat down silently in meditation was a boy wearing clothing of a lotus design — the Nezha Prince. This line-up was the team that the first-generation Sun Wukong originally led in the ‘Journey to the West’. They had been pushed into the category of being most noteworthy to watch due to their popularity. We had also greeted them earlier.

Next was the Flame Giant who had come from Northern Europe — Surtr. This Flame Giant was probably the most conspicuous person present. With a height of nearly twenty five metres (even this seems to be after a height limiter), a clone of him known as Second-sama was among one of Sirzechs-sama’s peerage members, but this one was the original.

[Gahahahaha!]

Amongst the people gathered in the stadium (at present), the largest one was a blue-skinned giant who was thirty metres tall. He had wings on his back, the upper body of a human, and the lower body of a snake. He was a player from the Greek Mythology, the King of Monsters — Typhon. There were also Gods who had come from other mythologies, but the few who were just mentioned are the most unique Gods among them. Most of the Gods who were regarded as the most powerful beings from various mythologies participated in the Evil Dragon War against Trihexa as part of the main force…but from the looks of things, there are still quite a few powerful Gods remaining. However, in regards to Gods being able to participate, many had the view that the competition would become unbalanced…. This concern was not incomprehensible. But precisely because this tournament exists, the participants also include a few strong contestants who can compete against the Gods. Moreover, we've also overcome that brutal Evil Dragon War, so our own strength has considerably improved. Even if our opponents are Gods, we won't go down against them so easily.

This World Tournament had gathered the strongest forces of every faction, so there was even the possibility of seeing an unknown team take down a God with strategy alone. According to the rumours, Champion Diehauser Belial, who should still be imprisoned, seems to have registered. It seems like it was something that the Maou Ajuka Beelzebub-sama did. Apparently his [Queen] is attending the opening ceremony on his behalf today. Under the circumstances that he is able to participate, knowing his personality, he would probably make some kind of statement, right…? Well, that's also somewhat noteworthy.

Among the people who had formed a team within a short timeframe, they had other reasons aside from simply their reputation or honour. This was because the winning team of

the tournament would receive a ‘victory prize’. —Being able to fulfil as many wishes as possible. That was what the ‘victory prize’ was. The VIPs of each faction had all supported Azazel-sensei and Sirzechs-sama who advocated the tournament, so they also made efforts to prepare the ‘victory prize’. The research of the Grigori, the technology from Heaven and the Underworld, the World Tree of Norse Mythology and so on, the mysteries of each mythology would be assembled together in order to fulfil the wishes of the champion team. There was no doubt that this announcement was the driving force behind the drastic increase in the number of participants. The participating Gods were also aiming for the ‘victory prize’. In the meantime, the request of ‘Please make the world more chaotic’ had already been denied in advance. Those who carried a wish gathered together. And as a result, the number of participating teams in this tournament was beyond measure. However, in order to enter the actual competition — there would only be sixteen teams in the final tournament. Looking at the number of participating teams, it would be very difficult to squeeze into the top sixteen teams.

According to Rias-neesan’s predictions, as the tournament progresses, the number of teams that abstain will slowly increase…. The qualifying rounds will begin tomorrow, and in comparison to Kuoh Academy’s schedule, it was good that it would continue until the end of our summer break. The system of qualifying rounds is based on the original Rating Game of the Devils, where the number of wins and losses — is in the form of points. This rule was borrowed from the game of chess that the Rating Game was based on. To begin with, each team had 1500 points, and they would accumulate more points by playing matches. If they defeated a team with a higher score than their own, they would receive more points. On the other hand, if they were

defeated by a team with a lower score than their own, then their score would fall sharply. Matches in this format would last until the end of summer. At the end of this period, the sixteen teams with the highest score would progress into the final tournament. Since there are more than a thousand teams participating, with even Gods also participating, the threshold to progress into the finals is incredibly high. In addition, participation in the qualifying rounds was decided exclusively by each team. If they wanted to fight, and if they wanted to gain points, then they would register with the organisers, and they would then be matched to a team that also wanted to fight. In other words, the management of a team was entirely dependent on the team itself. Tuning the team's status as well as its command was key. Rias-neesan said

"The adjustment of the entire team is the most critical thing. The key to victory is not about winning, but to avoid engaging in meaningless fights."

"If you don't plan out the schedule properly, you'll only end up suffering."

Akeno-san added. The most important thing would be the total number of points earned on the final day of the qualifying rounds. Even if there were several losses, as long as the final score was high enough, it would still be enough to pass the qualifiers. This was what Rias-neesan meant in that the key to victory was not winning. However, having more wins may well be a good thing since points could increase with every win. Even if there was a loss, it would not put anyone at a significant disadvantage. Therefore, it was important to adjust the whole team, so that when it came time to earn points, it wasn't about winning every single match, but to manage the points in the most optimal manner. Speaking of which…Ise-kun is really late. I looked at

my watch as I confirmed that. It was already time for the opening ceremony. There had also been a broadcast announcement saying ‘The opening ceremony will begin soon’. Gasper-kun also seemed worried about Ise-kun as he said

“Ise-senpai is somewhat late…. The minimum requirement for the opening ceremony is to have the [King] or [Queen] present…”

Could it be that someone new whom we don’t recognise has come here as his [Queen] on their own while he’s resting…? I don’t think that’s the case. After all, Ise-kun did say to me ‘I’ll definitely attend the opening ceremony!’. Just while we were worried about where Ise-kun was — the venue became even noisier than it already was.

“H-Hey! Look at that!”

Despite not knowing who shouted that out, we all looked up at the sky. As soon as we looked up — we noticed that there was an enormous object flying towards the venue! It was a flying boat with a hull that was reminiscent of a dragon! Every one of the media’s cameras turned to capture that scene, and the host of the venue also exclaimed loudly.

[Wow! A flying boat has appeared in the sky above the stadium! What’s more, it’s a flying ship adorned with the design of a dragon, and it has just appeared directly over the stadium! Ah! If we take a look at the footage from the helicopters, it appears as though there are people on board that airship!]

The large screens within the stadium displayed a live stream. Upon seeing the figure of the person who was on the screen, we couldn’t help but feel amazed. The people who

appeared there were Ise-kun and the others wearing a crimson uniform! Rias-neesan exclaimed in surprise

“Ise!? T-Then, that flying ship is Ise’s familiar?”

I see! There was a high chance that that flying boat was Ise-kun’s familiar! The magic boat that Sirzechs-sama’s [Rook] Surtr Second-sama had given to Ise-kun. It was originally so small that it looked like a model ship…but after a while of not having seen it, it had actually become such an enormous airship! Perhaps because of Ise-kun’s growth, it had also grown large in proportion. After growing to such an extent, it had naturally become a flying fortress. Ise-kun’s Dragon Deification may have also influenced its exterior dragon-like appearance. Ise-kun clicked his fingers, and the flying boat became enveloped in a dense smoke — and then became small. Ise-kun and the others then jumped directly down into the stadium, followed by a splendid landing. Ise-kun held Asia-san with a princess carry before letting her down, and moved towards us as soon as he caught sight of us. Ise-kun, Asia-san, Xenovia, Irina-san, Ravel-san, and Rossweisse-san weren’t wearing Kuoh Academy’s uniform, but a similarly styled red uniform; this was probably their team uniform. Following behind Ise-kun was a dragon who was more than ten metres long and with an appearance that was quite similar to the Devil Dragon Tannin-sama. He was Tannin-sama’s son who had wanted to assist Ise-kun. So he also became a member of his team. With the body of an enormous dragon behind him, Ise-kun was really becoming more and more ‘king-like’. However, there was also another member that we didn’t know. It was a masked person who wore a red cloak. Their mask was also red, and one couldn’t help but think of a dragon upon seeing it. They had a slender body, so it was probably a woman…. Ise-kun smiled wryly as he said

“Ah, sorry to make you all wait. We finally finished our uniforms, but only at the last minute.”

I see, so they were late because they were preparing their clothing. Rias-neesan asked Ise-kun

“Then that flying ship — is Ryuuteimaru?”

Asia-san nodded.

“Yes, in fact…its recent growth is what caught Ise-san’s attention…”

…So he only noticed it by coincidence? Well, after all, since he wasn’t always looking at it, perhaps even Ise-kun, as its master had almost forgotten about it. Unusual things always seem to happen at the beginning and end of the year.

“You finally came, Hyoudou Issei.”

—At that time, upon seeing Ise-kun’s flashy entrance, familiar faces began to come over one by one. The first one was Sairaorg Bael-san. Ise-kun also looked pleased to see Sairaorg Bael-san.

“Sairaorg-san! Yes, I’ve come. —Along with my team.”

The next person was — Cao Cao.

“Hehe, it looks like I’ll have an opportunity for revenge.”

“Cao Cao! Yeah, I’ll defeat you head-on this time!”

Ise-kun courageously responded to Cao Cao’s challenge. Then, a special man stood before him. —Vali Lucifer.

“Hyoudou Issei, so you’ve come. Excellent.”

Vali extended his fist out, to which Ise-kun also extended his. Their two fists bumped with each other.

“Yeah, Vali. Let’s have a good battle as the Heavenly Dragons.”

Afterwards, Rias-neesan majestically declared to Ise-kun as his master, lover, and opponent

“Ise, since you’re participating, we’ll be opponents. —I won’t lose to you.”

Ise-kun held Rias-neesan’s hand.

“Me too. Rias, I will defeat you!”

Beside her, Koneko-chan also said to Ise-kun

“Even if it’s Ise-senpai, I won’t let you defeat Rias-neesama. Right, Gya-kun?”

“Of course! —Ise-senpai, since we’ll have to fight, I’ll fight head-on!”

Gasper-kun also fearlessly declared that to Ise-kun. Ise-kun replied delightedly

“Yeah, Gasper. That’s right, us Gremory males have to show our talents.”

I also frankly declared to Ise-kun

“Me too, Ise-kun. I’m also looking forward to a serious match against you from the bottom of my heart.”

I — am Rias Gremory’s sword. Even if the opponent standing in front of me is Ise-kun — I will still cut though him. Ise-kun thrust his fist towards my chest as he said

“Kiba, wait until that time. There’s no need to worry. —Fight me with your true skill!”

After we told each other our true thoughts, our rivals who have fought side by side with us gradually gathered together.

“It looks like we’re all here. Well well, it looks like this competition will become quite interesting.”

“Ufufu, I won’t lose. Rias, Ise-kun.”

“Rather than the [Rookies Four], it would be better to call this a competition between the elites of every faction.”

“Since you’re here to participate, that’s better than anything.”

Dulio-san, the Sitri team, Seekvaira Agares-san, Ikuse Tobio; the members of [DxD] had all gathered together. And then, the official announcement for the opening ceremony was broadcast.

[The time has come. The Rating Game World Tournament, the opening ceremony of the [Azazel Cup] is now officially starting. Would the teams please—]

Just like that, our short and long final high school life began with the opening ceremony of the World Tournament.

[1] Council President and Club President respectively.
[2] A multi-purpose squarish stadium in Tokyo’s Bunkyo Ward, with a width of approximately 216m.
[3] Śakra goes by various names, such as Indra, The Heavenly Emperor, and Taishakuten.
[4] The romanised Japanese names and their meanings respectively: Jikoku-ten (he who upholds the realm), Zōchō-

ten (he who causes to grow), Kōmoku-ten (he who sees all), Bishamon-ten (he who hears everything).

Team Members

Note1: The value of the chess piece is in tournament standard hence it will generally be different to the “Evil Piece” standard.

Note2: Only the [Pawn] would be given the value of the chess pieces with the bracket □□.

○ “Sekiryuutei of the Issei (Blazing Truth) ” team’s tournament registration members.

□King ——— Hyoudou Issei

□Queen ——— Bina Lessthan

□Rook ——— Rossweisse

□Rook ——— Unregistered

□Knight ——— Xenovia Quarta

□Knight ——— Shidou Irina

□Bishop ——— Asia Argento

□Bishop ——— Ravel Phoenix

□Pawn□3□——— Bova Tannin

□Pawn□5□——— Unregistered

○ “Rias Gremory” team’s tournament registration members.

□King ——— Rias Gremory

□Queen ——— Himejima Akeno

□Rook ——— Toujou Koneko

□Rook ——— Unregistered

□Knight ——— Kiba Yuuto

□Knight ——— Lint Selzan

□Bishop ——— Gasper Vladi

□Bishop ——— Valerie Tepes

□Pawn□8□——— Mister Black

○ “Hakuryuukou of the Morning Star” team’s tournament registration members.

□King ——— Vali Lucifer

□Queen ——— Fenrir

□Rook ——— Gogmagog

□Rook ——— (Current) Zhu Bajie

□Knight ——— Arthur Pendragon

□Knight ——— (Current) Sha Wujing

□Bishop ——— Kuroka

□Bishop ——— Le Fay

□Pawn□5□——— Bikou

□Pawn□3□——— Unregistered

Indra & Sūn Wùkōng

“Hahaha, he really is one energetic little Devil da-ze. The Sekiryuutei. What a grand entrance. —It’s allowed me to enjoy this a bit, wouldn’t you say so, Wukong?”

“Hohoho, Heavenly Emperor-sama, we enjoy the last of our youth at old age.”

“And for this reason you’ve decided to bring the first-generation Zhu Bajie, the first-generation Sha Wujing, the Dragon King Yu-Long, and even the Nezha Prince into your team, despite having already decided that you were going to retire them. You really are going all-out considering that it is your last youth, right?”

“Compared to me, Heavenly Emperor-sama, you plan to have a decisive battle against the God of Destruction if you attain the victory prize, right?”

“Of course. However, there is also the possibility that those plans will be overthrown. Hahaha, you can laugh at me, first-generation. I may be a bit immature, but I want to enjoy stirring up some trouble.”

“I understand. My comrades and I are also passionate.”

“In the meantime, this will go according to Shiva’s and Ajuka’s plans. …However, perhaps the opponents in our mind will be close at hand even if we don’t attain victory.”

“Hohoho, when it’s been said by a God, that inevitably increases its authenticity by some degree.”

Life.5 Go, the Sekiryuutei Team!

Part 1

Ten days had already passed since the beginning of the World Tournament—.

All of the members of the [Sekiryuutei of the Blazing Truth] team were gathered in the Hyoudou household — in the room that belonged to me, Hyoudou Issei. Everyone showed a bitter expression. All of us were watching the news program displayed on the television screen which was being broadcast from the Underworld. —The news program was introducing us. This section was introducing the events of the World Tournament which had just started not long ago, which is why there was also some commentary on us.

“The highly anticipated hope of the Underworld, the [Sekiryuutei of the Blazing Truth] team has a proud record of three straight wins since the beginning of the qualifying round, but they always seem to have their flaws and loopholes exposed by others during the competition, and this surprising outcome has led to the emergence of disappointed opinions. Regardless of whether this is from the general public or critics, they have been on the receiving end of some harsh judgement—”

The video that was played back was of our situation during the matches. We had won three straight times to date, but…. In the recording of me that was shown, the opposing team had just revealed one of our flaws, causing us to receive an unexpected counterattack, so to be precise, we did not

achieve total victories. For now, we have won matches against teams of Devils, human special ability users, and Orcs. The television program was playing back one of the areas where we did not perform well, and it was actually quite ridiculous. Playback of scenes where my attack missed, Xenovia was attacked from her blind spot, Irina was penalised for violating special rules, and so on were shown one by one. The cameras turned towards the general public who were in the audience. They also seemed to show complicated expressions on their faces.

“Since he’s had a very early promotion to become a High-class Devil, we’ve all been looking forward to a lot. After all, the [King] Princess Rias who allowed him to grow and develop truly is incredible.”

…Other teams had also been penalised for breaking the rules, and also appeared to have losses in a few aspects. My team was the only one to be presented in such a manner. The next section was an interview of a mother and her child. The child was holding a figurine of the ‘Oppai Dragon’ in its hands.

“My child is a fan of the ‘Oppai Dragon’, so we came together to cheer him on, but it feels as though every match is rather disorganised…. Watching the matches of the other young Devils is actually somewhat more comfortable.”

This time it was time for the child who was a fan of mine to speak—

“I want to say that the matches of the ‘Oppai Dragon’ don’t feel very interesting. That’s because if they’re not running all over the place, then they’re releasing super gigantic light beams. Also, the Oppai Dragon doesn’t even say oppai oppai.”

That really is some merciless criticism. …They specifically chose people who cared about us, and then criticised us to such an extent. I really hate these media reporters. They even went as far as to show the criticism from the child…. The stream then returned back to the news room. The host was listening to the critics' opinions.

"Under ordinary rules, Hyoudou Issei-shi [1] relies on sheer power to supress his opponents with light blasts, but under the special rules, his actions are actually unfavourable. It is evident that Hyoudou Issei-shi, who has attained various honours in actual combat does not actually have a very good understanding of the Rating Game as it is an entirely different thing."

The critic sighed, and then continued onwards.

"After all, he was formerly a player who was a symbol of strength for the Rias Gremory team that tends to rely on power to win. When put in the position of commander like this, it's no wonder that he is unfamiliar with the rules and is unable to adapt. Not to mention that the same power-type contestant Xenovia—"

Ravel simply switched the television off, without any intention of listening to the rest of the critic's opinion.

"Even if the situation is evident, it can't really be helped."

Xenovia said bitterly.

"…Are they planning to talk about my situation next?"

"Yes, it certainly is a very ruthless critique of us one after the other."

Irina also nodded silently. Ravel summarised what had just been stated on the television program.

“What they’ve said is the truth. But it won’t help even if we concern ourselves with the public’s evaluation of us. We need to cheer up. I believe I said this before the start of the qualifying round, in order to progress into the final group, the number of wins is not an absolute condition.”

“The important thing is the number of points, right?”

Ravel nodded.

“In order to enter the finals of the tournament, we must be one of the top sixteen teams by the end of the qualifiers. Points are ordered from highest to lowest, we gain points by winning, and we lose points by losing. In other words, a high score is not equivalent to the number of matches. If we were to have losses and wins continuously, then we won’t be able to obtain a high score.”

Regardless of wins and losses, all that was needed was a high score at the end in order to enter the final sixteen. Before the tournament started, I spoke with Kiba and the others about this while we were simply chatting. Ravel continued

“Everyone is somewhat jumbled together at the beginning of the qualifiers. Scores are generally the same, so for the time being, there are a lot of people who are simply observing. The real difference should appear during the middle period. From then on, the higher-ranked teams will have a clear goal, and that’s when the race begins.”

Also, no matter if they win or lose, the number of wins of a powerful team will definitely continue to increase, and there will inevitably be a gap between them and the weaker

teams. And the time when this becomes the most evident is at the halfway mark. Rossweisse-san took over as she continued

“Towards the latter half, there may be powerful teams that deliberately abstain from participating in matches.”

Ravel nodded in agreement.

“Because there are so many participating teams, it’s not easy to predict which team we may go up against. If we run into a difficult team and lose, then the points that we’d have accumulated up until then will fall. That’s why the score at that time will become the highest score of the team, and then all that’s left will be to sit and wait for the qualifiers to end. In the latter half, trying to squeeze into the final group from a low position will probably be very difficult.”

In other words, avoiding matches is also a strategy. Also, as long as we make it into the top sixteen, all we have to do is avoid any actions that will lower our points, moreover, our stamina isn’t limitless either. Ravel raised her index finger.

“The most important thing in this tournament is the time when our team should participate. It is impossible to keep our physical condition and momentum in the best possible condition throughout the entire competition period. So we need to look out for opportunities to break through during the qualifiers, and then build up all our points at once. Of course, if there are matches that we can avoid, then we should do so.”

We should avoid competing against the God-class beings who occupy the upper ranks. However, according to the rules of this tournament, if we run into them and have no other choice, then it’ll be important to take good care of the

team’s overall state during that time. Ravel then turned the conversation towards me

“—Ise-sama, the idea of wanting to defeat everyone is impossible. From a social perspective, you should accept challenges from others, but your team has a limit, and if you accept every challenge, then the team will fall apart because it cannot cope. Remember that you shouldn’t allow your score to decline unnecessarily. The lives of the entire team have been entrusted to you as the [King], and deciding which is a suitable match is also the responsibility of the [King]. If the occasion arises where you must decline, please be determined to do so. The primary goal here is to enter the finals.”

My strategic advisor-sama truly has a perfect grasp of my psyche. I shrugged.

“Alright, I understand. Since everyone has entrusted their lives to me, I won’t do anything reckless. If I think that what lies ahead is not good, I also have the tolerance to step down and retreat. But — knowing that it is a match that we must face, running away and not facing it head on is not like me…and it’s not like us either, right?”

I asked my members. Xenovia folded her arms as she nodded firmly.

“As expected of Ise. That’s right, when we’re going to go, we should charge to the end all at once.”

My [Pawn] who had been shrunk to a miniature size — Bova, seemed to have become so emotional that he shed tears.

“That’s right, my lord! Ooh, this is the very reason why I became a subordinate of the Sekiryuutei!”

This dragon always has a grateful look whenever I say anything or do anything, and acts like this as well…. When I was looking for members after I had just become a high-class Devil, he appeared before me. He lowered his head and begged me several times, simply because he wanted to fight with me. He didn’t ask to become one of my servants, he simply wished to become my subordinate. Since he had already said so much, it wouldn’t do any good to ignore him. Moreover, he’s also my great benefactor Tannin-ossan’s son, so it would also be rude of me to refuse. So he was not one of my servants, but simply a subordinate. —At that time, Irina raised a question.

“Speaking of which, our [Queen]…Bina-san doesn’t seem to have come, could it be that she is dealing with her usual work? If I remember correctly, she is a Devil?”

Xenovia then said

“Although I only know her through Ise’s introduction, she really is a figure surrounded by mystery. But she is certainly very strong.”

Indeed, our [Queen]…a Devil named Bina Lessthan is a masked woman. For some reason, she appeared before me, and also for various other reasons, she eventually became our [Queen]. Of course, she isn’t one of my servants, at most she would be one of my team members for this tournament. Rossweisse-san said with a bit of unease

“…I’ve only met her a few times, and I’ve also spoken with her a few times, but since I’m not clear on her true identity, I’ve been a bit uneasy…but she really does have experience with the Rating Games.”

Uh-huh. We met in late March — during that time, I was busy looking for team members. And it was early April when my

peerage and team first met her. There is a secret underneath her mask. At present, the only person aside from me who knows her true identity — is Ravel.

“Her strength is real. After all, the three matches so far have been good proof of that.”

Just as Ravel said, Bina-shi’s ability among the members of my team was second to none. So far in the tournament, she’s been able to defeat her opponents, and unlike us, she hasn’t displayed any flaws as of yet. She defeats her opponents with minimal movements, and has not received any damage so far. Even on television—

“Regarding the Sekiryuutei team’s [Queen], that is, the masked player; her splendid battles are always quite stunning.”

Thus, she received a favourable and positive evaluation. Nonetheless, Bina-shi seems to be committed to being one of our team members until the end, so the final decision was always up to the team — or perhaps subject to my own judgement. In April, I spoke with Ravel and Bina-shi about a variety of things. In the end, she basically left everything that was related to the competition to us. …After all, it seems like Bina-shi wants to see my qualities as a [King]….
As the meeting progressed, we also discussed other teams. Vali, Sairaorg-san, Sona-senpai, Dulio, Cao Cao, Ikuse-san and the others had all progressed smoothly and successfully. Seekvaira-san had encountered a God-class being as soon as she entered, and despite fighting until the end, she was still defeated. All that can be said is that she was unlucky, but this was all part of the format of this tournament. The God-class beings had basically won all of their matches, but there were still teams which had yet to participate. One of those

was the Heavenly Emperor’s team. Was this just for observation, or was it for….

The display finally showed Rias’ team. Rias had also obtained several straight wins. Compared to us, she had won much more gracefully, and had also received a highly positive evaluation. Coupled with Rias’ natural popularity, the media was presenting her in a favourable manner. Ravel said

“She really is impeccable. During this time, Rias-sama has continued to obtain victories, and has been steadily building up her score.”

—At this point, the video stream cut over to show Valerie, who was treating an injured Koneko-chan in the midst of a game. A Holy Grail appeared, and liquid from within it was poured onto Koneko-chan’s injury. After a brief moment, the wound had healed.

“…So Valerie is a healer huh.”

Ravel nodded in response to the thoughts that I had spoken aloud.

“It looks like that’s another way of using the [Sephiroth Graal] [2]. Its characteristics can be changed and it can also be used without affecting the user.”

…Simply by producing a cup, its adjustment ability made it possible to produce a liquid that was capable of restoring team members. In this tournament, unlike its predecessor, the Rating Games, the restoration item ‘Phoenix Tears’ are not provided. After all, as a result of Qlippoth’s influence and the destruction caused by Trihexa, ‘Phoenix Tears’ had been distributed everywhere, thus it was not a situation in which more could be provided. They had been replaced with

recovery points throughout the tournament venues, and one's injuries could be treated by going there. Irina said

"Unlike Asia, Valerie-san does not seem to have a high rate of recovery…but I believe she has a few other tricks up her sleeve."

Well, I also agreed with that. This was an ability that was originally related to life itself. Although its ability to heal other people was similar to Asia's, that was not its actual power—. Perhaps there was also something they were hiding from us? Oh— oh—, on the other hand, Gasper's Balor had easily sent a bulky opponent flying. It seems as though that guy has succeeded the role of the power representative since I left them.

"Speaking of which, this person in Master Rias' match is rather concerning."

Xenovia was focusing on a particular person in the Rias Team. —Indeed, after Xenovia seemed troubled for a moment, she eventually added 'Master' before Rias' name. The person whom Xenovia was referring to was the new female swordsman who was a [Knight]. She had black and white streaked hair, and she was also dressed in the same battle suit that Xenovia and Irina wore as Church warriors. Asia said

"It's Rias-oneesama's swordsman…san huh. She's the one who has replaced Xenovia as the team's—"

"—Lint Selzan. Moreover, she does not appear to be a member of Rias-san's peerage."

Irina also looked at her thoughtfully. Speaking of which, her name is Selzan. Her face is actually quite similar to the face of that annoying guy in my memories. However, she doesn't

make any vulgar facial expressions like that guy did. It seems like she just resembles Freed a lot! Her combat style also involves wielding a gun and a sword. She wielded a sword imbued with the power of light, and also used a gun as she ran about during the match. Xenovia quietly murmured

“So she’s only a combatant for this tournament huh…Selzan. She and Freed should be related in some way.”

Irina nodded.

“When looking at her, she really is like…. Based on this footage of the match, she doesn’t seem to be as crazy as he was…. Xenovia, have you heard of her name during the time when you were still with the Church?”

In response to Irina’s question, Xenovia shook her head.

“No, including Freed, I hadn’t heard of them even once while I was still a Church warrior. …Could she possibly be from a secret division that has concealed her identity?”

“…Well, if I was to go to Heaven, I would probably be able to find some clues.”

Irina seemed to be just as worried as Xenovia was. After all, she seemed to be from one of the warrior training facilities, she wore the same type of battle suit, and her surname was also Selzan. It was only natural to feel concerned about her. I also couldn’t help feeling troubled by it. Even when I asked Rias, she replied to me with something along the lines of

“Ufufu, I won’t tell you about Lint. This is a team secret, so it would be bad if I let it slip out, you know?”

However, since even Rias was giggling when she replied to me like that, it was an indication that she wasn't a particularly bad person…. Xenovia noticed something on the screen, and then pointed towards something on the television.

"Among other things, the sword of flames that this person is wielding…is purple."

Irina also murmured

"Flames of purple…purple flames…is that how it can be considered?"

Ravel seemed to have done some prior research on it, and she gave us the report to read.

"The Vatican headquarters and the Grigori; these two factions have jointly handed her over to Rias-sama. …That is to say, it's exactly the same as what you guys have guessed. That Longinus has selected its master, and it has now been transferred."

This was the girl that the Vatican and the Grigori had both entrusted Rias with. Not only was she related to Freed, she also possessed — a sword of purple flames that originated from the Longinus [Incinerate Anthem][3].

"The deeper we go, the harder it is to believe her existence. Just who is this girl…"

Xenovia placed her hand against her chin and squinted her eyes as she spoke. Rossweisse-san then said

"Regardless of what her identity is, Rias-san's team…could be described to already have the power of three Longinuses.

If you leave aside the God-class beings, then she should be one of the leading teams in this tournament.”

Three Longinuses—. Even though Gasper’s Sacred Gear is treated as a special case, it has also been recognised as being in the same class as a Longinus.

“I heard that there is also another member present…but they haven’t participated in any matches yet.”

I said. According to her registration, Rias’ team also has a new member as a [Pawn]. And as Rias’ original [Pawn], I was rather worried about this. Ravel then said

“All we know at the moment is the name that was used during the registration process. …[Mr. Black]-san. I believe that is most likely a pseudonym. Because of the rules of this tournament, a [Pawn] with eight pieces on its own is a major threat. I wonder if it’s someone that rivals a God-class being’s power, or is perhaps even a god themselves…”

—They had a value of eight pieces in this tournament. Even if they were limited by the value of the [Pawn] piece, having eight pieces meant that they were incredibly strong, right…? Has Rias dragged in even the power of a god into her team? This was truly remarkable. Irina also said

“A god in Rias-san’s team…. Rias-san is also the core of [DxD]. If she extended an invitation, I wonder if a god would accept…”

But Xenovia expressed her doubt on this.

“So this is the substitute for Ise? Ise has forced Rizevim into a corner, defeated a Heavenly Dragon-class Apophis, and fought against Trihexa’s core in the Evil Dragon War. Even a

god wouldn’t be able to casually accept an invitation to replace Ise.”

I felt honoured to receive such praise…but, was it really that hard to find a replacement for me? Would I be used for comparison? Well — hmm. Rossweisse-san also nodded in agreement with Xenovia’s opinion.

“I also agree with Xenovia-san. Ise-kun has now become a [King], but he is still Rias-san’s [Pawn]. Even if it’s only for this tournament, I find it hard to believe that there are gods who would readily accept being judged like this…. After all, the entire world will be comparing them to Ise-kun.”

Unless they were up against a powerful opponent, Mr. Black would not come out to fight. Perhaps I’ll just look forward to that time then. …Perhaps he’s the kind that doesn’t care about looking forward to things, or perhaps that guy is just ridiculously strong. At that time, the program changed scenes to show Kiba instead. Kiba relied on his prided speed and swordsmanship to instantly cut down his opponents. In the footage that was played back, there was not a single person who was able to catch up to Kiba, let alone attack him. A few days before the tournament began, Kiba said to me

“I — swear that I will remain Rias-neesan’s [Knight] for my entire life. Before you, I had already been recognised as Rias-neesan’s [Knight]. So, now that you have your own team…from this point onwards, you and I are rivals. Even if you and I are friends, if we happen to fight, I will not hesitate to stand before you as Rias-neesan’s sword.”

Before I could say anything else, my friend Kiba continued

“Ise-kun, at that time, we’ll both show off our true skill! — Being able to have a serious fight with you, that is

something I look forward to!”

…Kiba, if I really have to fight against you or Rias…I will definitely stand up for an honest showdown. I definitely won’t lose to you guys!

“—Ise-sama, Ise-sama.”

Ravel pulled me back from my reminiscence of Kiba.

“Ah, oh, what is it?”

Ravel sighed.

“Really, please focus. Ise-sama is our [King], right? Even if I can give you advice, the final decision still rests in your hands.”

Hahaha, our manager-sama really is strict. She actually became even stricter after becoming one of my peerage members. But this is all for my sake, so I’m counting on you, Ravel. At that time, a knocking sound reverberated over from the door. After answering, the people who came in were — Le Fay and Kunou, as well as Lilith.

“U-Umm, has your meeting concluded yet?”

Le Fay asked us nervously. She was holding a tray in her hands, on top of which was some tea.

“Oh, it’s Le Fay. I was just looking for a time to take a break. Everyone, is that alright?”

When I asked, everyone smiled as they nodded. Upon seeing this, Kunou took the red tea that was on the tray and served it to everyone.

“Please have some tea, Ise.”

“Oh, thank you Kunou. But, uh Lili — no, Lith.”

Whilst I wasn’t paying attention, Lilith sat down on my lap again. It seems that aside from Koneko-chan, the people who compete for my lap are increasing, with Ravel and Lilith now among them as well. By the way, Lilith has now been entrusted to us. Because we previously had taken care of Ophis, it naturally became the case that the Hyoudou residence became the default place for keeping someone hidden. And precisely because of this, the Ophis (Lilith) who was being controlled by Qlippoth was proclaimed to have disappeared during the battle. But going back to the main point, like Ophis’ name, Lilith’s name couldn’t be exposed in front of Kunou, so it was shortened to Lith. Either way, the name isn’t too different.

“Cake cake.”

The Lilith on my lap seemed interested in the cake on the tray, and after receiving a portion from Ravel, she began to eat it in big mouthfuls. Just like Ophis, she seemed to be a big eater. The cake that Ravel had prepared for everyone was a chocolate cake.

“I also prepared a cake for everyone, so please enjoy it.”

So it was Ravel who personally baked it. While Kunou tasted the cake (the edges of her mouth were stained with chocolate), she said

“That’s right, constantly talking about difficult topics will only cause your brain to slow down, so we should rest a little!”

Although she said that, it was really just to vent the fact that she was unable to play with us, which is why she found an excuse to come over to us. Hahaha, Kunou really is cute.

“Le Fay, Kunou, have you gotten used to school life?”

I asked the two of them.

“Of course! I immediately made friends! I didn’t think the people here were so easy to converse with.”

Indeed, Kunou didn’t come to the Occult Research Club after school sometimes, so she was probably playing with her friends at those times. That was good, it was good to hear that she was able to make friends. Le Fay said with a calm expression

“For me, high school life is a new starting point, and although there are a lot of areas that I’m unfamiliar with… it’s all very fresh to me, so I’m enjoying it.”

I then asked about the Vali team’s situation.

“How about the Vali team?”

“After the new team members, the current Sha Wujing-san and the current Zhu Bajie-san joined our team, we immediately headed into a match, so it was a bit overwhelming.”

Indeed, the new members of the Vali team were the current ‘Sha Wujing’ and the current ‘Zhu Bajie’. I had also only just heard about it this Winter, and had also met the two of them. The first-generation old man Sun Wukong said that he wanted to train the two of them for the sake of inheriting the positions of ‘Sha Wujing’ and ‘Zhu Bajie’; thus he entrusted them to Vali. They were supposedly reserve members…but it looks like they’ve become part of the official team for the tournament. A contemporary Journey to the West combination had been formed within Vali’s team, and it

would really be worth watching if they went up against the first-generation's team. I then asked Kunou.

"It seems that there are also Youkai participating in the game?"

"Uh-huh. From each of the leaders, three teams have been elected to participate in the tournament. Kyoto also has three teams. The team to which the strongest member in each area belongs is said to be strong enough to act as the leader's representative. Ise and you guys, if you encounter them, you definitely can't be careless, okay?"

Kunou said that whilst eating, but at that time, the door was opened once again.

"I, appear."

The one who had arrived was Ophis. But, she wasn't in her adult form, rather, it was the girl version of Ophis. Upon seeing that someone had arrived, Kunou also welcomed them.

"Oh, Phis-dono! Have you returned from the shrine on the rooftop [4]?"

"Sunbathing, done."

Oh, from time to time, Ophis goes to the miniature shrine that was built specifically for her on the rooftop. She really likes sunbathing up there. Everyone here also goes there occasionally to visit, and puts some money into the donation box. This is treated as pocket money for Ophis to spend. I looked at Ophis, and muttered quietly.

"…I didn't think that it was possible to revert back to this appearance."

It was exactly as I said. In order to save me, Ophis’ figure and many other factors had been restricted, but…. Irina quietly told me

(This is a specially-made change that was done so that Kunou-san isn’t surprised. Also, I usually find this appearance to be more calming.)

A change huh. A body transformation into a loli. Kunou would indeed be very surprised if she saw an adult version of Ophis. We were also more accustomed to her current appearance. Seeing Ophis and Lilith stand side by side — it was really hard not to laugh. Including Kunou, this was kawaii times three!

“…Also, having Ophis and Lilith stand together like this makes it feel as though nothing is out of place.”

Just while I was in the midst of talking to myself as I watched this laughable scene, a magic communications circle next to Ravel’s ear was deployed.

“Ara, it’s a message from the tournament’s coordinators.”

Oh, it’s a message from the tournament.

“—Hmm. We were so immersed in our discussion that we even forget about the pairing.”

Ravel quickly took out a tablet, and then logged on to the organiser’s site. What was shown there was — the date of our next scheduled match, and our opponent.

“…The opposing team for our next match has already been decided.”

We were all surprised upon seeing it! Ravel said

“—The team’s name is [Lightning]. An entry from the Grigori…and the [King] is Barakiel-sama.

…This was the international tournament that all kinds of people had returned to compete in…! The incident that had occurred at this very moment in time finally allowed me to grasp an understanding of it; this kind of confrontation was even more realistic than I had expected! I didn’t think that I would be matched against someone we were familiar with so soon! We had encountered our first major obstacle.

Part 2

After we confirmed our opponent for the next match, we went downstairs to lighten our mood. We happened to run into a familiar person speaking with Akeno-san in the living room on the first floor. The person who had come here was a well-built man — it was Barakiel-san!

“…Ah, Barakiel-san!”

I never imagined that I would come face to face with the man himself right after reading the announcement! Barakiel-san also noticed me.

“Hyoudou Issei-kun.”

Based on his tone of voice, it was evident that he knew that he would be facing us in the next match, and Akeno-san also seemed to know, and the atmosphere suddenly became

quiet. I steadied my breathing, and then sat down on a nearby sofa.

“Did you come to see Akeno-san?”

“Yes, there were a few things that I wanted to ask about university life. But, speaking of which—”

Barakiel-san dove straight into the main topic right after the greetings were over.

“In the next match, my opponent will be you. Let’s both give it all we have. As a representative of the Grigori, I will do my best to enjoy this match.”

“Yes, I feel the same, I look forward to it.”

Both of us were passionate men, who also stood as the mutual leaders of our own teams, so our competitive spirit towards each other was naturally beginning to leak out. However, Akeno-san was looking at me and Barakiel-san alternately with a troubled expression.

“Ara ara, Ise-kun actually has to compete against chichi-sama…I don’t know which side I should cheer for.”

Barakiel-san asked his own daughter with a hint of shyness.

“…A-Akeno, if you could only cheer for one side…which side would you support?”

That was the facial expression of an expectant father! I couldn’t help thinking of the time when Barakiel-san cried at the graduation ceremony! As a parent, he was absolutely looking forward to hearing that his own adorable daughter was going to root for him! Akeno-san! Under such circumstances, you should cheer for your otou-san! I sent

this suggestion to Akeno-san in my mind! Just think, if Akeno-san chooses me, then Barakiel-san will—.

“That’s right, let me think…”

After Akeno-san seemed troubled for a moment, a mischievous smile emerged on her face, and she then pressed her body towards me — she tightly embraced me.

“Of course, it’s Ise-kun ♪”

“……Uhh!”

It looked like Barakiel-san had taken a serious blow to his heart right in front of me! It had already gotten to the point that his eyeballs were popping out of his eye sockets, and several blue veins also emerged on his temple! Barakiel-san had become so angry that he couldn’t help trembling! His face was also unnervingly scary! With his finger pointed at me, he furiously shouted!

“Argh, you! I definitely won’t lose to you in the match, you Oppai Dragooon!”

After saying that, Barakiel-san ran off in tears! …Aaaaahhh, my rapport with the opposing team’s leader has just collapsed right before the match! He’ll definitely come at me with 120% of his strength in the match! Upon seeing this, an impish smile appeared on Akeno-san’s face.

“Ufufu, chichi-sama, you’re too adorable.”

Akeno-san, you’re making fun of your otou-san again…. However, Akeno-san suddenly revealed a sorrowful expression.

“…But, in reality, my feelings are complicated. Regardless of whether it’s Ise-kun or chichi-sama, I want you both to win. But, since you’re opponents, a victor will have to be decided…. Although there is the possibility of a draw… neither Ise-kun nor chichi-sama wishes for this outcome.”

“Yeah, a winner will have to be decided since we’re competing against each other. A winner will need to be decided regardless of whether it’s Barakiel-san’s team, or Rias’ team…”

I gave a serious reply to Akeno-san. Since we were contenders, even if it was Barakiel-san, and even if it was a relative of Akeno-san, we still needed to win. If this wasn’t the case, I wouldn’t have any reason to form my own team. —Since I’ve decided to fight, I will aim for victory no matter what. This was our goal! Akeno-san’s face blushed slightly, and she continued to stare at me…. All of a sudden, Akeno-san said

“…Truly, I envy Rias. She has such a strong man who can say that he wants to stay together with her forever…”

Before Akeno-san could finish what she was saying, she said “It’s time for me to talk to Rias, I have to go.” and then exited the living room. I wonder if I should have said that to Akeno-san today. No, it isn’t a question of whether I should or not, it’s something that I must say. But it was somewhat disappointing that I couldn’t say it now…. …Akeno-san, in fact, I always—.

Part 3

And so, it was now the day of the game.

The place that we were going to was in the Underworld — the new stadium that was built in the Fallen Angels' territory for the tournament. There was already a swarm of people within.

The name of the stadium was 'Azazel Stadium', and a bronze statue of Azazel-sensei had also been erected at the entrance. And right in the centre of the stadium were — the two teams who stood within the field. The opposing team's [King] was Barakiel-san, and their [Queen] was also a Cadre of the Grigori—.

"Griiiiigoriiiiiiiiii! Long time no see, Oppai Dragoooon—! Guhahahahaha!"

This unique manner of speech belonged to the Cadre of special effects, Armaros-san! I never imagined that this person would participate in the tournament, and as a member of Barakiel-san's team as well! Although the other members were not Cadres, they were all high-ranking Fallen Angels who had survived a countless number of fierce battles. Just like us, the [Lightning] team had not suffered any losses so far. During the period when both teams stared off at each other, the announcer and guest commentator began their explanations over the microphone.

[Today's match is the centre of attention, the highly anticipated [Sekiryuutei of the Blazing Truth] team versus the [Lightning] team! Both teams are powerful competing teams from the Three Factions, and everyone is simply holding their breath to see what will unfold in this match! Our guest commentator is from the Devils' side, Princess Rias Gremory's father! Well then, Gremory-kyo [5], thank you very much for being with us today.]

I didn’t expect that the guest commentator would actually be Rias’ otou-san! Moreover, today was also our match against Akeno-san’s otou-san, Barakiel-san; it seems like fathers are present wherever we go today!

[No no, it is my pleasure, thank you for having me. From a personal perspective, I do want to cheer for my daughter’s fiancé, Hyoudou Issei-kun, but I will provide a serious commentary for everyone today.]

Rias’ father politely greeted the audience. Say, he actually said ‘fiancé’ during that commotion!? Did he already hear about the oath that I made to Rias about our future, or was that something he just said in the spur of the moment!? The announcer began to explain today’s rules.

[The format of this match is [Object Break]! The team which destroys the most target objects in the game field within the time limit wins! Also, as with the previous rules, the entire field will be divided into different areas, just like a chessboard.]

A chessboard-like area appeared on the enormous display screen. As soon as the match starts, we will be transported into the dedicated battlefield, and begin our fight there. We will not actually be fighting inside this stadium. The field was tremendously vast, and even if a Devil had to fly from one side straight to the other at full speed, it would take nearly thirty minutes. But depending on my position and situation on the field, I could fly from one end of the field to the other in a matter of minutes? The announcer continued to explain the rules

[A total of thirteen [objects] have been prepared within the game field! As long as one team finds and destroys more [objects] than the other team within the twelve hour time

limit, they will be declared the winner! Of course, and needless to say, the other rules of this tournament are still in effect, so defeating the other team’s [King] also results in a victory.]

I had heard about the rules for counting the number of destroyed [objects] beforehand.

[Going by a simple calculation, as long as either side destroys more than half of the [objects], in other words, the first team to destroy seven [objects] will be declared the winner, and the game will end there.]

…Although fighting was also important, finding and destroying the [objects] was the top priority.

[Some of the prepared [objects] have been placed in the field in their original state, whilst some are in less noticeable positions, and some possibly even hidden in obscure places. The two teams will have to race through this broad field, and whilst the players are fighting each other, they must also find these [objects] and destroy them.]

Now then, I wonder where these things are hidden…. Supposedly, the shape of these [objects] will be revealed to us at the beginning of the game.

[In addition, if the twelve hour time limit is exceeded, and both teams have destroyed the same number of [objects], the match will be determined to be a draw.]

It’s possible for a draw huh. But, all that lay on my mind was the thought of victory.

[There have been similar matches in the Rating Games of the Underworld in the past; even when a lower ranked team with a large power gap between a higher ranked team are

set against each other, lower ranked teams have been able destroy an equal number of items to the other team, and then engage in a defensive battle until time runs out to successfully draw a tie. This subversion of expectations and the plethora of limitless possibilities is one of the charms of this game.]

…In terms of strength, the outside world may have always believed that we were more dominant, but according to these rules, we also had the possibility of facing defeat. Rias' otou-san said

[In other words, it is sometimes the case that neither of the two teams can find all of the [objects] within the allocated time limit.]

[Well, nominally speaking, because the [objects] are placed randomly, there may be rare situations in which they cannot be found. This would result in an unexpected scenario, and some teams may give up on searching, and choose instead to defeat the opposing team. Of course, if the [objects] in a field can be easily located, it is more likely that we will see an early destruction of the [objects] rather than an attempt to defeat the opposing team.]

In other words, if the game progressed into the latter half, we may as well switch our strategy to defeat the opposing team, rather than continue to search for these [objects].

[One point to add is that after an [object] is destroyed, special rules will apply to the area in which it appeared. The [King] of each team cannot enter that area. In other words, as the game progresses, and as [objects] continue to be destroyed, the areas in which a [King] can move around in are gradually reduced. How the two teams will consider and

integrate this into their strategy as they move is also one of the highlights of this game.]

[This means that as the battle continues, the [King] will be left with nowhere to escape to at the end.]

—In this way, the announcer and Rias' otou-san thoroughly explained the rules of the game in detail. …The last rule meant that the [King] would not be able to enter an area where an [object] had been destroyed, which was going to be troublesome. Standing beside me, Ravel whispered

"I have something that I need to confirm."

"What is it?"

"—It's whether an [object] can be moved or not."

…Whether an [object] can be moved huh. Ravel continued

"Based on the [objects] prepared in the previous [Object Break] games, there have been both stationary and moveable ones. If there happen to be moveable [objects] this time, it will become somewhat tricky."

If they can be moved, then it will indeed be trickier, so it was necessary to confirm this fact.

"So, when we encounter an [object], we need to confirm whether or not it can be moved first."

I responded to Ravel's strategy.

[Now, the game will begin right away! After both teams are transported, and have confirmed the shape of the [objects], the game will begin!]

The announcer’s words encouraged the audience to heat up, and we were then wrapped in the light of teleportation magic—.

Part 4

After we had been transported, what appeared before our eyes was — a vast natural environment. There were towering mountains that spread out around us. There was also a lake not too far from the forest of trees. From the looks of it, a mountainous terrain had been used as a template for this field. In one particular corner — stood a steep cliff that our base camp was situated on top of. A table and a set of chairs had been prepared atop the cliff. A full map was laid out across the table. Just like a chessboard, it was set out in an eight by eight grid, with a single line drawn across the middle separating the north and south sides. The northern half was the opposing side’s territory, whilst the southern side was ours. We also confirmed the location of the ‘recovery points’, with each side having one. Then, a projection from the table showed a three-dimensional image of the [object]. The [object] was — a statue of a woman with the wings of both a Fallen Angel and a Devil. …The [object] inevitably reminded me of Akeno-san. —At that time, the field resounded with ring of a bell to signal the beginning. Most likely, after both we and our opponents had confirmed what the [objects] were, they announced the opening. And like that, the game began. Ravel cleared her throat as she said

“—Well, everyone. I will now begin to explain our strategy.”

While we listened to our strategic advisor Ravel’s instructions, we began to prepare for the game—.

One and a half hours had passed since the beginning of the game. I had been instructed to explore the western side of our territory. Bova also came along with me to explore the west. Speaking of which, because the field was so vast, there were places that weren’t possible to see with the naked eye. Well, as I flew in the air overlooking all that was below, I couldn’t find anything that appeared similar. Sometimes I would descend into the shade of the trees and into the valleys, and I would even check out the river occasionally, but still came up emptyhanded. After all, we were not told of how large the target item actually was. Without knowing what its size was, if it was a small object, it’d be even more troublesome. In the end, I wonder if it’s possible to find the number required to win ahead of our opponent…. Just at that moment—. An announcement was broadcast across the entire field.

[Confirmation that the [Lightning] team has destroyed an [object]. They have gained one point.]

—What! They’ve taken the lead!

[Whoa! The first [object] has been destroyed! This action has come from the Grigori’s [Lightning] team! But the game is still in progress, which side will be the ones to destroy the next [object]!?]

A calm message from Ravel reached my ears.

“Please do not get impatient. They have simply taken one point.”

…Although that was the case, and my mind was clear, I couldn’t help trying to speed up. …Ah, no, I can’t. If I did that, it would be a dereliction of my duty as the [King]. I had to calm my own emotions. Ravel, who was in charge of our strategic command, as well as Asia, who was our healer, remained at our base camp…in an inconspicuous area not too far from it. Since it was dangerous to stay in an unguarded base camp, they had hidden in a more discreet location. Given the possibility that there could be an [object] nearby, Asia summoned the four Evil Dragon brothers to search. —Good news suddenly arrived at my ears.

“This is Xenovia. —I’ve found an object. It’s roughly thirty centimetres in size.”

It was communication from Xenovia who had gone to explore the eastern side of our base camp. Ooh, we’ve actually found one! Ravel said

“Understood. Please confirm whether you can move it before destroying it.”

“…It can be moved. Ravel, Ise, what now?”

Ravel responded

“Since it can be moved, we’ll need to change our strategy for this game. We won’t destroy it, but we’ll keep it as a weapon of our side.”

“…We’ll move it first, and then destroy it in a location that will be favourable to us.”

I said. Since it was moveable, we’d do just that. As a last resort, it could be used as a weapon when fighting against their [King]. After all, carrying something that was just 30

centimetres in size was rather convenient. Ravel reaffirmed my statement.

“Indeed. This can be treated as a weapon against their [King]. The way these [objects] are used will change the direction of the entire game.”

Rossweisse-san said through the communications channel

“Given that’s the case, perhaps our opponents have already found other [objects], and destroyed one, but are holding on to the rest of them, waiting for the right time to use them.”

“T-They shouldn’t have gotten their hands on three of them already, right…?”

Irina (responsible for searching the eastern side) nervously asked. Ravel replied

“Given the vast extent of the field, it should be impossible to have three, unless they were extremely lucky. However, the probability that they’ve found two is quite high. But taking into account these small possibilities, for now, we should act as though the other side have already captured three.”

“So what about this one? Should I destroy it? Or should I keep it?”

Xenovia asked Ravel.

“In my opinion, this one should be saved. Finding the second one as soon as possible is the most important thing. What do you think, Ise-sama?”

“Yes, hold onto it first. Let’s continue to find more of these target items and so that we can go ahead advantageously.”

As long as they don’t get stolen, and we hold onto them safely, we could destroy them all at the right time. After all, we weren’t clear on what the other side was planning, so it was best to hold onto them for now.

“After Xenovia-sama and Rossweisse-sama regroup, please analyse the [object]. Rossweisse-sama, I’m leaving things up to you then.”

““Understood.””

Upon hearing Ravel’s instructions, both Xenovia and Rossweisse-san responded. Rossweisse could use magic to analyse the [object], and then formulate a technique to search the field for them; this was our plan. If successful, then we would easily be able to find all of them. Rossweisse-san said

“Analysis of the [object] and creating a searching technique will take a significant amount of time. …And it may also be unusable for people who are not familiar with searching techniques.”

I’m exactly the type who can’t use it! I’m sorry that I’m not good at techniques! Anyway, aside from myself, there are a lot of people who aren’t good at searching techniques either, moreover, the reincarnated Angel Irina is also present, so coming up with a technique that was compatible with everyone would take a lot of time. Ravel used a direct channel to me only to confirm our strategy.

“Ise-sama, regarding the ‘check’ we talked about earlier…I’ll contact you after watching the combat situation for a while.”

“Yeah, when that time comes, I’ll go all out.”

Ravel told us about the strategy immediately after the game began. It was truly bold, and truly fearless. But, I was also very fond of it. …I would wait until that time, and then I would let Barakiel-san and the audience bear witness to it. Ravel issued instructions to Bova.

“Bova-san, please transform into a miniature dragon form from time to time so that you can sneak into the opponent’s territory and scope out the situation. If there are any changes, please let me know. However, please do not go too far.”

“Understood.”

Completely ignoring the opponent’s position was also very dangerous. The next two and a half hours were spent exploring. After Irina had located another [object] on the eastern side, she destroyed it.

[Confirmation that the [Sekiryuutei] team has destroyed an [object]. They have gained one point.]

Immediately after we destroyed it, we heard an announcement that Barakiel-san’s team also destroyed one —.

[Confirmation that the [Lightning] team has destroyed an [object]. They have gained one point.]

…It was obvious that they were provoking us. They had already obtained a few of them? Our original plan was caught up in such thoughts. But as soon as we destroyed one, our opponents also followed by destroying one. So after about ten minutes, a message came from Irina.

“This is Irina! I’m being attacked by the opponent!”

—What! They’ve started attacking!

“Please engage them, and try to find out what they’re up to at the same time.”

Ravel immediately gave instructions.

“This is Bina. I am also being attacked.”

Another area was also being attacked! Bina-shi and Rossweisse-san had both been ordered to explore the central area of our territory. Both our central and eastern sides were being attacked at the same time! I didn’t expect that we would shift from search mode to attack mode before even half of our time limit had passed! What was their intention!? They definitely had some kind of tactic going on here! Just while I was thinking about that, a sudden flash of light appeared in my field of view! I quickly evaded, and although I had avoided my opponent’s attack…. But that just now was — lightning! I looked towards the person who had attacked me — it was Barakiel-san!

“…I didn’t imagine that I’d encounter you. This must be fate.”

…I didn’t expect that the person to attack the western side would be Barakiel-san! Not to mention the fact that this developed into a battle between the [Kings]. I immediately equipped my crimson armour. Let alone my ordinary Balance Breaker, after that Evil Dragon War, I could now also equip my [True Queen] form immediately. And not only that, my strength had also been increased due to influence of Dragon Deification. Even if my opponent was Barakiel-san, I wouldn’t be at a disadvantage.

[Wow! A battle between [Kings] has suddenly kicked off right now! We’ve really been caught off guard, Gremory-

kyo!]

[This is really something to look forward to. He is my daughter’s fiancé, fiancé, you know? Fufufu, he really looks handsome while wearing armour.]

Rias’ otou-san!? What are you saying!? Don’t keep firing off the word fiancé just like that! You’re making me feel embarrassed! I can’t even focus on fighting!

“Let’s go!”

Even if I asked, Barakiel-san simply wasn’t going to wait for me; rays of lightning burst forth from his hands, and he continuously fired them towards me! I continuously evaded his attacks in the air. The bolts of lightning which missed struck a corner of the field, generating an enormous explosion! Its power was truly extraordinary. Although I’ve recently had to fight against people who were stronger than me, Barakiel-san’s strength was not to be underestimated. Whilst evading the bolts of lightning and closing our distance at the same time, I was able to enter into a melee battle, what I was best at. Barkaiel-san easily dodged my punches, and I was struck by one of his punches in return. Although I had been hit squarely by a solid punch, it didn’t carry enough power. This was all thanks to having fought against those strong opponents so many times. —Even if I was fighting against Barakiel-san in melee combat, I still had an advantage over him! I began to go on a rampage against Barakiel-san in mid-air. Sometimes I would close our distance, and sometimes I would pull away from him. We continued our battle like that in mid-air. In the midst of our fight against each other, Barakiel-san suddenly asked me a question.

“Hyoudou Issei-kun! —Regarding Akeno, I have something to ask you!”

“W-Why does it have to be right now!?”

“It has to be right now!”

Asking something about Akeno-san right now!? You can’t be serious! What’s happening to today’s game!?

“You — how far have you gotten with Akeno!?”

Barakiel-san asked me with absolute seriousness.

“Ah…! W-Well, that…!”

It’s hard to say! It’s very hard to say! This morning as well, she approached me in bed completely naked! Although it didn’t happen, I did feel her oppai!

“Why aren’t you saying anything!? C-Could it be that you’ve already reached the point where it’s unspeakable…!?”

Barakiel-san was trembling!

“N-No! I-It hasn’t yet…!”

I quickly retorted! What kind of situation is this! Barakiel-san charged at me with his fist raised in the air!

“Are you holding hands together!? Dating…I’ve seen it…!”

Ah, he saw us on our date! When Loki attacked us last year, Akeno-san and I accidentally went to a street full of love hotels and happened to be seen! At that time, I was so embarrassed that I didn’t know what to do! Barakiel-san then continued asking!

“S-Ss…!”

“Ss!?”

I asked in return, and with a downtrodden expression, Barakiel-san asked me

“—Have you kissed!?”

—Kiss. He was asking about kissing…? W-Well, that’s something we’ve done before. We had a very long and wet one before the graduation ceremony….

“…Y-Yes.”

After I gave an honest answer to him—.

“—!”

Barakiel-san was shocked. His body stiffened up in mid-air, and he began to cry manly tears….

“…U-Umm, Barakiel-san…?”

I nervously asked him…. Dark clouds began to appear above Barakiel-san’s head, and the sound of thunder began to rumble. With thunderclouds in the background, a dangerous gleam appeared in Barakiel-san’s eyes as he said to me

“……You’ve already gotten to that stage, so if y-you don’t take responsibility, as a father, I can’t rest assured!”

“Responsibility!? R-Responsibility as in!?”

“Do you even need to ask this type of question!? A young man and woman have kissed! You must take responsibility for this!”

What responsibility!? Because of a kiss!? Then what about what lies beyond it…touching her oppai! I have to take responsibility just for a kiss!? Barakiel-san's entire body was clad in lightning! It was an unimaginable aura! —I hadn't seen this kind of power even in the battle against Loki! I-Is it because of his daughter that his wrath and jealously towards me has arisen!? Clad in lightning, Barakiel-san charged directly towards me! Even if I was able to/dodge his fist, the shock of the lightning would be transmitted to me through my armour. My entire body would be paralysed by it! It'd be bad if I was hit by a direct attack! After all, light is a deadly poison for Devils! Barakiel-san's power of light combined with lightning — it would be dangerous if I was hit by that lightning! I began to retort as I countered his attacks.

"Umm, I heard from Azazel-sensei before that Barakiel-san is also a very erotic person!?"

"That's…that!"

"Avoiding the topic!? It's just like this!"

I heard very clearly that he used to do SM play with his late wife! E-Even I have not set foot into that territory! Barakiel-san used his lightning to form a long spear!

"As things are now, I must test you as Akeno's father! With this, let me have a good test of how compatible you are with my daughter!"

Like this, the battle between the two [Kings] became more and more complicated! I transformed my right arm into its Welsh Dragonic Rook form as I attacked, but Barakiel-san retaliated fearlessly. Even if I increased our distance and used Dragon Shot, Barakiel-san would fire off an enormous lightning bolt at me. But whether it was for better or for worse, I had fought against several legendary existences.

Barakiel-san was finally struck by one of my direct attacks, and was knocked backwards. Barakiel-san panted in deep breaths as he wiped away fresh blood from the edge of his mouth with his hand.

“…As expected of you. So this is how strong you are…. As expected of someone that Azazel trained.”

Indeed, it’s all thanks to Azazel-sensei that I was able to become this strong. Barakiel-san smiled as he said

“With strength alone, the present me can no longer defeat you. —But, this is a Rating Game.”

Barakiel-san raised his right hand, stretched out a finger, and released a single bolt of lightning towards the sky. After that, Barakiel-san retreated. Just when I chased him in order to reach an outcome for our battle…. An urgent message came from Ravel just a second later.

“Ise-sama! There are three of the opposing team’s players coming towards you! Moreover, they’re all — holding [objects]. —What! What happened!? Did the lightning that Barakiel-san released into the sky have this kind of purpose? Because of that, three opponents with [objects] are approaching me now! Could it be that they want to destroy those [objects] in front of me? I couldn’t understand what their plan was at all — but I immediately saw a change in the scenery in front of me. Some kind of barrier appeared to be forming—. Barakiel-san was on the other side of the barrier. Preceisely because it was a barrier, although it was only as thick as a layer of skin, it separated Barakiel-san and me apart. At the same time, an announcement was made.

[Confirmation that the [Lightning] team has destroyed three [objects]. They have gained three point.]

—Three! If that’s the case, then they’ve already destroyed five of them! Regardless of that, what was this barrier in front of me!?

“T-This is…!?”

Because of the change that had occurred before me, I couldn’t help but feel surprised, while Barakiel-san calmly said

“—This is the area change because [objects] have been destroyed. The announcer should have mentioned this as well at the beginning of the game. If an [object] is destroyed —”

The area in which an [object] is destroyed — a [King] cannot enter!

“Speaking in terms of a chessboard, you are currently on the edge of [B1]. I am in [C2], and the areas that we cannot enter are [A3], [B2], and [C1], which form a perfect diagonal line. Which means that since you are in [B1], you cannot go past this diagonal line.”

“This was your plan from the beginning!?”

Since I was on the far side at [B1] and I couldn’t enter the area that was divided by the diagonal line, the only three areas that I was able to move around in now were [A1], [A2], and [B1]. It also meant that I was no longer able to move into any other area. They had cleverly chosen the areas that couldn’t be entered so as to form a barrier, with not a single gap! Barakiel-san continued

“In fact, meeting you here was purely coincidence…. But this is the outcome that I obtained. …We were aiming for this when we thought about where to place the [objects]. It

just so happened that you and I fought against each other, and I thought that it was time to implement this plan, so I contacted my teammates. The plan was originally to lure the [King] into one of the four corners of the field, and then use the rule that a [King] cannot enter the areas where an [object] has been destroyed to create this barrier. There have been teams in the [Object Break] games of the past that also used this tactic. —This strategy is known as [Imprisonment].

— [Imprisonment]!

True to its meaning, I was now trapped in the area of these three squares! Barakiel-san's attitude took a sudden turn, and he became rather cold.

"By mentioning Akeno, you became confused and I was able to implement this strategy. It was to prevent you from noticing that you were being lured into a corner. As expected, you were confused by my words and didn't take notice of our intentions at all. I said it just earlier, it was a test for you. Brute strength on its own is not enough, being able to face various circumstances on your own is also necessary. It'll be a worry if the man that my daughter likes is a idiot."

…….

…Damn it! Because he brought up Akeno-san, I was completely fooled…. I completely fell for it! But, my team won't be taken down so easily.

[Of the [Lightning] team, one [Knight] and one [Bishop] have retired; three [Pawns] have also retired.]

When it came to combat, it seems like my team has the advantage, as demonstrated by that announcement.

“Ise! Although we don’t know what’s happening to you right now, we trust in you as our [King], and we will continue to fight.”

“That’s right! If there’s something you need to slice apart then leave it to us! Xenovia and I are your [Knights].”

I received a message from my reliable companions. Xenovia and Irina both seemed to have continuously defeated the opposing team’s players. On the other side of the thin barrier, Barakiel-san said to me

“Hyoudou Issei-kun, the Rating Games will bring a variety of challenges. If you wish to lead your team to participate in professional games in the future, remember that there are sometimes situations in which power alone is useless.”

Barakiel-san then looked back as he prepared to retreat towards the rear.

“Now then, I have to support my teammates. You stay there and work out what to do with your teammates.”

After saying that, Barakiel-san waved his feathered wings and flew off. Because of the barrier, I had no way of getting to the other side! At that time, Ravel’s spoke to me.

“Ise-sama! What’s going on!?”

“I’m sorry, Ravel, I was fighting in a corner of the field…and then I was trapped in by [Imprisonment].”

After I concisely explained the situation, Ravel immediately gave me a good idea.

“—Hmm. …There’s a way to fix this. Ise-sama, do you know about the chess rule where only a [King] can change

locations? Remember when you were present during the peace talks between the Three Factions and it was done.”

During the peace talks…change positions…. Ah! The one that was used to rescue Gasper!

“”—Castling!””

Ravel and I said it together at the same time! Aha! I have seen it once! In order to rescue Gasper who was left behind in the old school building when the [Khaos Brigade] first attacked us, Rias used her unused [Rook] piece in the club activities room to transport herself into the old school building via ‘castling’. Right now, it should be possible to make use of that! Ravel continued

“Yes, it’s just as you say. Swap places with Rossweisse-sama. According to the rules, ‘castling’ can be performed once as long as the [King] is not in a ‘checkmate’ situation. You will be able to perform ‘castling’ once with Rossweisse-sama. In that case, Ise-sama will be free to move, and since Rossweisse-sama isn’t a [King], even if she swaps places with you, she can still enter the modified areas.”

Ravel had also included Rossweisse-san in the plan. Really, having Ravel by our side is truly encouraging! She immediately came up with a solution! No, this is something that I originally should have thought of! Perhaps this is what Barakiel-san was trying to lead me towards. This is also related to my worth as a [King] in the future. It was not long before word from Ravel came again.

“I have already contacted Rossweisse-sama about this, so please immediately begin preparations for ‘castling’!”

“Alright! Castling!”

I called the name of the move as I though of the Evil Piece in my chest. And then — I was surrounded by the light of teleportation. The next instant, I was above the lake! It seems as though I really did change positions with Rossweisse-san!

“Awesome, it worked!”

I rejoiced! Next, as long as my [Rook] Rossweisse-san passes through the area that a [King] cannot enter and returns here, there won’t be any problems! However, Ravel’s voice had a tone of surprise when she contacted me again.

“How could this be…!”

“What is it, Ravel?”

“The place that Rossweisse-sama transferred to — is the same place that Ise-sama was in, but there’s a new opponent! It seems like it was an ambush!”

“—What!”

Ambush!? C-Could it be that after the [objects] were destroyed, one person stayed behind on that side, lying in wait for Rossweisse-san who would go there by ‘castling’!? And the instant that I heard the name of the ambusher, I was stunned!

“…It’s the Fallen Angel Cadre Armaros-sama!”

—What! The ambusher was actually the Cadre of special effects, Armaros! Ravel exclaimed in regret.

“The opponent is an anti-magic specialist! For a magic use like Rossweisse-sama, he is the worst possible opponent! …I

see, this is what they were aiming for! Trapping Ise-sama was just a feint! Their real goal was—”

Rossweisse-san…! We gave the task of analysing the [object] to Rossweisse-san—. Did they also predict that…! Ravel continued

“…In a game with special rules, magic users who are able to wield a variety of magic are valued. Especially Rossweisse-sama who is using magic to locate the [objects], she is particularly important to us. …I never expected that our opponent had even predicted this and even made preparations for it…!”

…The ultimate aim of Barakiel-san, who had trapped me there, was to ambush Rossweisse-san…. We’ve really been deceived at every single turn…!

“…Rossweisse-san is trapped, and I can’t use ‘castling’ again either. But the game still goes on…. I see, so this is a Rating Game huh. Compared to participating as a [Pawn], it really is much tougher as a [King]—”

~~~~Arghh!

I couldn’t say a thing as an expression of anguish coloured my face. Gnashing my teeth and tightly clenching my fist, I endured my sense of regret. If I didn’t do that, I would probably roar at the top of my lungs. Daammmnnn itttt! This feeling of regret was completely different! …Rias…so this is what you felt like. Because I didn’t think things through, Rossweisse-san was now pinned down there. I was unable to use my team members flexibly, and I was even strung along by the opponents’ tactics every step of the way! This feeling of regret that I felt was different from what I felt as a [Pawn], and the pressure of it felt even heavier because of my
~~~~

responsibility! It’s frustrating, it’s truly frustrating! Ravel said

“…I think there is more than one member of the opponent’s team who is specialised in searching, there should be two of them. After all, researchers do account for the majority of the Grigori. Being able to find five of the [objects] in less than half of the allocated time limit is the best evidence of that.”

…After all, it is the organisation that Azazel-sensei commanded. The number of Fallen Angel researchers is truly horrifying. In order to deal with a variety of Rating Games, a variety of people were elected for the team. Ravel continued her speculation

“Most likely, in order to find [objects] as soon as possible, they prepared many different strategies. They must have also entered our territory. Since we haven’t found many [objects] on our side, our opponents must have been searching for objects on our side whilst they engaged in combat with us.”

…In other words, the time left for us was running out. Our searching magic has been sealed off, whilst the opponent’s searchers are still active. After a while, the [objects] that are on our side will be taken away, and they will be destroyed, leading to our defeat. Our opponent just needs to find and destroy two more [objects] to become victorious in this game—.

Part 5

After Hyoudou Issei used ‘castling’ to perform a swap of his own position with Rossweisse, appearing before Rossweisse was the [Lightning] team’s [Queen], the Grigori Cadre Armaros.

“Gwahahahaha! I remember how you used to be a Valkyrie! You’re also good at magic, but I won’t be allowing you to pull any tricks!”

The person who stood in front of Rossweisse was a Fallen Angel Cadre who wore armour, a cloak, and was armed with an axe and a shield. He had a bearded face and even wore an eyepatch…it was unclear whether or not he only had one eye. Based on appearances alone, he looked like an extremely eccentric character that would leave people confused. However—. Rossweisse unleashed a full-powered attack of each attribute — only for it to be

“Fuwaa!”

Just one steady swing of his axe caused all of those attacks to be annihilated! They were not blocked, and neither were they deflected. He had used the impact of his axe swing to completely eliminate all of the incoming magic attacks. Even someone like Rossweisse who had great confidence in her own magic attacks couldn’t help but be stunned upon seeing what unfolded before her eyes.

“It’s my turn now! Hyaaaaaaahhh!”

Armaros lifted the axe up high, and then slammed it down in an instant! The resulting shockwave and its blinding speed destroyed the surface of the ground as it gradually approached Rossweisse. Rossweisse immediately erected a defensive magic circle. This was a technique that she had learnt from the Norse mythology, and when combined with her own characteristics as a [Rook], this could be described

as an indestructible high defence magic shield. It was impossible for normal attacks to—. In the very instant that the shockwave from the axe came into contact with her magic circle, the sound of its shattering reverberated throughout the air, and Rossweisse's prided defensive magic circle was easily destroyed!

"—!?"

She couldn't even leak a single sound to express her surprise. This was the defensive magic circle that had defended against numerous powerful opponents in the past. It had even endured against the fierce attacks of Evil Dragons. Yet, a single attack from this Cadre of special effects far exceeded Rossweisse's expectations. In this game, even if Armaros was bolstered by the characteristics of the [Queen] piece, something like this was unimaginable. Upon closer examination — the enchantment of a technique was inscribed upon Armaros' axe. And that technique seemed familiar because she had seen it somewhere before.

—Anti-magic!

…Armaros' anti-magic — she had heard about his tenacious study of anti-magic…but she had never imagined that he would be able to eliminate her magic so easily. Although she was aware that Armaros relied on physical methods to eliminate magic…she never thought that such an outcome could be obtained by enchanting his own weapons with the results of his anti-magic research…. Rossweisse communicated her current situation to Ravel. In order to analyse the [object], she had received one of them from Xenovia. That was why she absolutely could not act carelessly. She could not allow the [object] to be destroyed by her opponent either. Ravel said to Rossweisse

“I will think of countermeasures.”

Rossweisse judged that facing him head-on would be the worst possible situation for her, thus she quickly flew into the air. By using magic, she could enhance the abilities of her own body and increase her own speed, and after that, she could then cast a barrage of magic attacks. Since she had the advantage in speed, all she had to do was fire off magic towards a blind spot—. Just as Rossweisse was considering this, Armaros raised his shield. The same enchantment that was present on his axe appeared on his shield.

“How sly of you! You’re toooooo naïve though!”

His shield shone with a radiance that enveloped the entire surrounding area! And as for Rossweisse who was bathed in this…she realised that her own speed had suddenly reduced. All of the physical abilities that she had enhanced with magic had disappeared! What was even more shocking was the analysis technique that she had been using on the [object] — it had been also eliminated by this radiant light! The shield that Armaros was holding in his hand actually had the power to decompose magic!

“Guhahahahaha! When set against the flow of magic, my axe will tear it apart, and my shield will eliminate it! My research on anti-magic is not just limited to theoretical knowledge!”

The announcer’s cry was then heard.

[Ooh! The magic of Rossweisse-senshu [6] who is a talented magic user now appears to be helpless against Armaros-senshu! Armaros-senshu, who is better known as a researcher of anti-magic is indeed a Cadre of the Grigori! The effects of his anti-magic are extraordinary! Just like their

previous games, the true strengths of Hyoudou Issei’s team have not been utilised!]

The announcer commented on the situation rather loosely. Rossweisse shamefully clenched her teeth, and once again decided to strengthen her offensive and defensive magic. But Armaros’ axe tore her magic apart one by one, and due to the effects of his shield, even her speed-enhancing magic had been eliminated. At this moment, Rossweisse was convinced. —Her compatibility with this Fallen Angel was the absolute worst. The opponent most certainly must have taken this into account, which is why Armaros was facing her. She was good at using magic for offense and defence, hence an anti-magic expert with the worst compatibility with her was sent here. Strategically speaking, this was a natural decision…but she never imagined that her own attacks would be completely useless. Her overly naïve thoughts were exposed. Indeed, Armaros was a colleague of that Azazel. He was a powerful man who had overcome all kinds of battles and survived—. But there still existed magic that was effective against Armaros.

—Sealing techniques.

The very thing that Rossweisse had been researching in the battle against Qlippoth were sealing techniques. Even Armaros, who was an expert in anti-magic, would not be able to fully eliminate a barrier. The problem was…that to devise a barrier that would be able to seal Armaros away would take a long time. If she only made a half-baked barrier, Armaros would definitely be capable of destroying it from within. It had to be something that could fully seal him. In this case, she really needed time in order to construct the technique—. If another one of her allies came here, then it could be done. But they were currently engaged in combat against the opponent, so it would take a significant amount

of time for one of her allies to arrive. Moreover, it was already taking all of the effort that she could muster in order to deal with Armaros' attacks under the current circumstances. Just as Rossweisse was thinking this, Armaros shortened the distance between the two of them and swung his axe down!

"Yaaaaaaarrrgghhh!"

Rossweisse instantly expanded several layers of defensive magic circles — but they were destroyed layer after layer. Rossweisse immediately added another defensive magic circle. But Armaros' axe mercilessly destroyed Rossweisse's magic circles one after the other. The shockwave that was generated by the swing of his axe passed through the magic circle and was transmitted to her body. …Immense pain coursed throughout her entire body. If hit by a direct attack, it was very likely that she would be forced to retire from the match. This was the one thing that she had to avoid! Rossweisse endured the shockwave of the axe, and even created an enormous crater as she crashed into the ground. Just as the final layer of her defensive magic circle was destroyed—. A blast of energy was unleashed from behind Rossweisse. Armaros immediately responded to this by dodging this blow. Armaros directed his eyes to the person behind Rossweisse.

"Hohoho, so another one has come! I have to say that you have excellent taste in choosing a mask to wear!"

Rossweisse also turned around to look — the person who had appeared behind her walked forwards slowly, she wore a red mask and was the [Queen] of the [Sekiryuutei of Blazing Truth Team], Bina Lessthan. Bina stood in front of Rossweisse and said

“Are you alright?”

It was the voice of a young lady — it sounded like she was in her teen years. Bina then confronted Armaros. At the same time, a message came from Ravel.

“Rossweisse-sama, Bina-sama has rushed over to your side. Please team up to take Armaros-sama down!”

It seems it was under the directions of Ravel. Indeed, her intention was to deal with the opponent’s [Queen] right here. Ravel understood that this opponent was troublesome. Armaros seemed rather happy upon seeing Bina’s entrance, and instantly began to close in on her. He swung his axe horizontally near her waist. But it was easily evaded by Bina. At the same time, from her hands — she unleashed an extraordinary amount of demonic energy! A red magic circle — it was a pattern that she seemed to have created herself, yet it was reminiscent of a dragon. To be expected of Armaros, he immediately realised the danger. But Bina did not mind, and relentlessly let loose a cannon of tremendous demonic energy. That bombardment of tremendous demonic energy — destroyed everything that was in sight, it was so powerful that it seemed inhuman. This wasn’t the kind of demonic energy that just any high-class Devil was capable of producing. And upon seeing this, Armaros couldn’t help but become ecstatic. Bina said to Rossweisse.

“I will take care of the fighting, you construct a barrier sealing technique.”

After saying that, Bina began to face Armaros head-on. Rossweisse went along with Bina’s intentions, and began to construct a technique. While constructing it, she also began to think.

—Although I don’t really know who Bina Lessthan is, I feel like I can trust her.

The [Queen] of the [Sekiryuutei of the Blazing Truth Team] was far more reliable than she had ever imagined—.

Part 6

On the other hand, Xenovia and Irina who were exploring the eastern side were also under attack from the opponent. Their opponents numbered — a group of three people. They were mostly likely a group of [Pawns] who had gathered together to launch an attack. According to information that they had obtained beforehand, the opponent’s [Pawns] numbered eight in total. The previous announcement stated that Irina and the others had already defeated a [Bishop] and a [Knight], as well as three [Pawns]. More specifically, it was Irina who defeated the [Bishop] and one [Pawn], whereas Xenovia had defeated the [Knight] and two [Pawns]. Perhaps the reason why the opponent sent reinforcements was because Irina had defeated their [Bishop]. Irina was exploring the region that she was assigned to, and coincidentally found several Fallen Angels who were searching for [objects] in that area. She had defeated the [Bishop] that probably excelled at searching, as well as a [Pawn] who was assisting. Whether or not this resulted in a major blow to the other side was still unclear, but since the other side sent reinforcements here, it meant that—. Irina moved closer to Xenovia and whispered

(It seems like there might be an [object] nearby.)

(The reinforcements indicate that something major is happening huh.)

Indeed, the number of players in a Rating Game were limited. When fighting in such a vast field, if the situation was not at a critical junction, then it was highly unlikely that their combat power was going to be focused on a single area. —Since this was the case, it was obvious that this was a very important area for them. The opponent had already destroyed five [objects], so victory was almost within their grasp. Right now, even if they had to make some sacrifices, they were most certainly after another [object]. After all, the rules this time allowed a team to win without having to defeat the [King]. In this way, the existence of an [object] was extremely important. Having to obtain one, and allowing one to be taken away were very troublesome. —Perhaps this was a key moment?

Irina smiled wryly as she used her eyes to signal Xenovia. It seemed like Xenovia also planned to fight here. At time like these, communicating with Xenovia simply via eye contact like how they used to when they were a duo caused Irina's confidence to double. Both sides leapt into action at the same time. The opponent was dominant when it came down to numbers. And after a few clashes, it was clear that the opponents were far from being as simple as mere [Pawns]. A female Fallen Angel wielded a large sword forged by light in her hands, and based on the speed of her attacks, it almost seemed like she was a [Knight]. Her movements also seemed rather skilful…after all, they were also people who had survived numerous battlefields, and would not be defeated so easily. One Fallen Angel pulled away and began to fire arrows of light as support, but Irina swung Hauteclere to unleash a shockwave. They dealt with the more bothersome one first. Although the bow-wielding Fallen Angel dodged the shockwave, he was quickly cut down by Xenovia who

had predicted the position that they would evade to. At times like these, even if they didn’t use words to communicate, Irina and Xenovia were able to understand each other’s thought process, and could immediately pursue. Soon afterwards, the bow-wielding Fallen Angel was enveloped in the light of retirement, and then disappeared from the field.

[Of the [Lightning] team, one [Pawn] has retired.]

The announcement was made. It seemed like the one that they had defeated just then was one of the opponent’s [Pawns]. There were two people remaining.

As long as Xenovia and I are a combination, we can do it! As long as we can defeat the next two players, we’ll be able to search for the [object] that is possibly in our vicinity.

While Irina thought that—. Thunderclouds appeared above Irina and Xenovia, and from there, fierce rays of lightning sprang out. Along with the arrival of the thunder, a man appeared—.

“Hmm, I’ll help out too.”

Barakiel — the Fallen Angel Cadre who had once been called the [Lightning of God], and currently the vice-governor of the Grigori. This man stood before Irina and Xenovia. …He was more experienced in life and death struggles than the two people currently before him combined, and if someone was to be struck by this man’s lightning, they would not escape unharmed. Especially for a Devil such as Xenovia, light was a highly toxic poison.

(Ise-kun, I’m sorry if I get defeated.)

For now, she apologised to her team’s leader in her heart. Needless to say, even if she was defeated, she would do everything that she could before that. The combination of Irina and Xenovia began to challenge the lightning that threatened them. The lightning that Akeno and Barakiel released as their allies now seemed so cold and terrifying—. But no matter what happened, he — Hyoudou Issei would surely determine the victor at the very end, this was the conclusion that Irina and Xenovia drew from their past experiences.

(So, darling. Use that…that unrivalled and impossibly powerful attack so that everyone can see!)

Indeed, although he was fated to accept a variety of evaluations, whether it was actual combat or a Rating Game, his strength was capable of overturning the entire situation —.

Part 7

“—To sum things up, Irina and I are currently fighting against the other side’s [King]. That’s all, from Xenovia.”

“—Just as planned, we’re stalling the opponent’s [Queen], Armaros here.”

I — Hyoudou Issei listened to the status reports from Xenovia and Rossweisse; both sides were in a heated fight.

[Battles are continuing in various places. Since the beginning of the game until now, Hyoudou Issei-senshu’s team has had the advantage when it comes to combat,

whereas the [Lightning] team has had the advantage in terms of the number of [objects] destroyed. So, will the [Sekiryuutei of Blazing Truth] gain a difficult victory just as they did in the previous game, or will they lose as a result of the [objects] being captured and destroyed!? Victory cannot be obtained by relying on force and power alone, for this is a Rating Game!]

…Damn it, this announcer is actually saying such ridiculous things during the commentary! However, I've also realised that the situation is not optimal right now! Just at this time, Ravel finally gave the signal.

"Ise-sama, it's time. This is already enough. —Please enact the plan that was mentioned earlier."

"—Alright, I understand. Although I regret it a bit, this is something simpler that I can use to make them understand."

"Yes, please show them the results of a simple and clear answer."

I began to carry out the plan that Ravel had proposed earlier — I began to fly towards the centre of the field. Hovering above a deep valley, I began the chant for power.

"—The Crimson Red Dragon dwelling within me, awaken from your dominance"

A dazzling crimson glow was emitted from the gem on my right gauntlet.

[—The Crimson Heavenly Dragon I possess within me, rise up to become a King]

Ophis' voice echoed out from the gem—.

The gem on my left gauntlet unleashed a jet-black aura.

“—The jet-black God of Infinity”

An incredible crimson aura enveloped my entire body.

[—The glorious God of Dreams]

The jet-black aura of infinity was then encased over it—.

“[—Watch over the false forbidden existence we shall become that transcends the boundaries]”

This verse is slightly different from the past. The difference lies in the addition ‘false’. My crimson armour was then tinged with a jet-black pattern. The power of the Dragon God had fully manifested. And then we recited the final verse together—.

“[—We shall dance like radiance within the inferno]”

“[[D∞D!! D∞D D∞D!! D∞D D∞D D∞D!!!! D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D!!!!!! D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D!!!!!!!!]]”

All of the gems resounded with a voice which said [D∞D!!] and permeated through to the soul. An ∞ symbol emerged on all of the gems!

“[[Dragon ∞ Drive!!!!!!]]”

Dragon Deification — no, it was something similar to Dragon Deification. If I did use Dragon Deification, my existence itself would immediately collapse. So within the chant, I added on a ‘restriction’, and though only for a short while, I could utilise this extraordinary power. After the transformation, Ravel notified all of our members.

“Everyone, Ise-sama has already undergone Pseudo-Dragon Deification! Please move according to the plan that was proposed earlier!”

There isn’t much time left! So I’ll have to do this quickly! Four large cannons emerged from my four wings, and I began to prepare for ∞ Blaster! An incredibly vast amount of aura quietly gathered at the muzzle of my cannons. Starting from the very instant that I let the cannons loose, the countdown for maintaining Pseduo-Dragon Deification will begin! A total of ten seconds! I wouldn’t be firing it just anywhere, but in accordance with the plan — the majority of the field will be blasted away!

“[[D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D!!!!!!!!]]”

An [∞] symbol appeared on all of the gems of my armour, as the colours of red and black flashed alternatingly. I can’t rely on pure power alone? I can’t win a Rating Game with pure power alone? Perhaps that may be the case. If I was just relying on some half-baked strength and power, people like us who are still inexperienced when it comes to the games would be made fun of. But—. If it’s not some half-baked strength, and not some half-baked power, then what happens? What will they think when they see the absolute power that we have gained through actual combat!?

—I, we, have worked hard to make it through this one intense year, so let’s give them a good look at the power that we have obtained!!

“I’ve confirmed that all of our allies within the range of impact have retreated.”

After hearing Ravel’s message, I felt delighted!

“Let’s gooooooooooooooo!”

“[[∞ Blaster!!!!!!]]”

An incredibly vast amount of aura was discharged from the muzzles of my four cannons! I maintained my firing position, drew out a semicircle as I turned, and continued to unleash the jet-black aura symbolising infinity and the crimson aura!

[V! IV! III! II!]

Until I reached the limit, I continued to bombard the field with my cannons—.

[I! 0!]

After the countdown finally ended, I also released Pseudo-Dragon Deification, and reverted back to my crimson armour. …Because of the aftereffects of Pseudo-Dragon Deification, most of my stamina and demonic energy had been depleted…but my crimson armour wouldn’t be undone yet.

—Alright, now I can continue to fight! After the potent bombardment of aura concluded, the sight that appeared before my eyes was — a barren and deserted wasteland with no mountains, valleys, rivers, nor trees. Everything had been blown away. The announcer trembled as he spoke

[Oooooohh! W-W-What just happened! T-The field actually! More than half of the field has actually been annihilated! Incredible! Hyoudou Issei-senshu’s cannons have erased the field’s scenery! THIS IS TRULY POWER BEYOND IMAGINATIIIOOOOON!]

At the same time, announcements for the retirement of our opponents and the destruction of [objects] were made.

[Of the [Lightning] team, one [Rook] and one [Bishop] have retired.]

[Confirmation that the [Sekiryuutei] team has destroyed four [objects]. They have gained four points.]

That cannon blast just now took out one a [Rook] and [Bishop] from our opponent’s side! That was a good result! If they were players who were searching for [objects], then it could be described as an even better result! I also destroyed four [objects]! Our numbers have increased almost instantaneously! This pushes our total up to five! Because we kept one more on our side that we haven’t yet destroyed, it’ll be a victory for us as long as we can find one more!

Now then, I’ll go over our strategy. Although my Pseudo-Dragon Deification can utilise an incredible amount of power, it has a time limit. I can maintain the transformation for three minutes, but if I convert that to perform attacks or switch to defence, then the transformation time limit will be reduced. A cannon blast at maximum firepower — if I use ∞ Blaster, the time limit will be reduced even further. From the moment that the bombardment began, a ten second countdown also began, and once it reached zero, Pseudo-Dragon Deification was forcibly lifted. There is also a crucial problem after the transformation is undone. —My stamina and demonic energy is vastly depleted. During our training, because of different styles of fighting that had been used, there were situations where I wasn’t even able to maintain my normal armour. To put it simply, Pseudo-Dragon Deification is a final move that can only be used at a critical time, but it is also the strongest means of attack that our team has. Based on the above reasons, preparations were

made for this plan at the beginning of this Rating Game. We first needed to make sure that I would be able to use Pseudo-Dragon Deification. However, it absolutely cannot be used when up against the other side's [King]. To give a reason for that, it would be because we don't know what kinds of tricks the other side has up their sleeve, so transforming and charging in recklessly could lead to my attacks being blocked, thus wasting an important means of offense. That being the case, it is necessary to find the right time to use it. After Ravel confirmed the rules for [Object Break], the gridded map was opened at the beginning of the game, and the plan was communicated to all members of the team—.

"We need to investigate the [objects] that are in our territory first."

Ravel used a pen to mark out the map. The field this time had half of a chessboard as our territory. A red circle was drawn to further divide our territory in half. That was a quarter of the field.

"However, it would not be very efficient if we were to search every corner of our territory. Moreover, there is also a time limit, so we should only target one area. We only need to perform a thorough search of half of our territory. But, it'll be bad if we allow the other side to discover our intentions, so we should still scatter all of the members of our team into the every region of our territory. And then, one group will perform a thorough search of half our territory."

"But, what are we going to do about the exploration of the other half of our territory?"

Irina asked. Limiting our search of [objects] to one quarter of the field would perhaps make it much easier to find them,

but the other areas will be left unexplored.

“Indeed, if that’s the case, it’s impossible for us to win. Perhaps our opponent will take the lead when it comes to the number of [objects] destroyed. But once the game reaches its mid-phase, we’ll change our style immediately.”

Ravel smiled as she explained the plan.

“Our team has been evaluated to have nothing but power. I don’t think there’s anything wrong with this. Of course, some people have said that there must be a minimum level of strategy. The people who want to laugh at us can laugh all they want. —However, if they see someone significant supressed by true power, the people who laughed at us will most certainly shut up.”

Ravel said to me

“Ise-sama possesses an unrivalled power that can be demonstrated by an immense cannon blast of energy with Pseudo-Dragon Deification—. This single blow will create that kind of change in the game, and they will be able to see it for themselves. —So in this game, please wait until the time is right, and then blow away the majority of the field.”

[—What!]

Ravel’s shocking plan left everyone speechless. Ravel then continued to add a few points. At the beginning, we would need to perform a thorough search of half of our territory. The area to be explored was our eastern side. The ones responsible for this would be Xenovia and Irina. At the same time, in order to prevent the other side from realising this, we still needed to visit the other areas to make it look as though we were searching. We also needed to move into our opponent’s territory. But, this was all just an act. Of course,

it’d be best if we came across [objects], but that was not the goal this time. After clashing several times, and when both sides had made some gains in destroying [objects], it would be my turn to shine with Pseudo-Dragon Deification. I would fly into the centre of the field, and the unexplored areas of our territory, as well as half of our opponent’s territory — in other words, a vertical half of the entire field would be blown away by a semicircular sweep with ∞ Blaster. I would draw a counter-clockwise semicircle going from north to south, which would eliminate the entire western side. Because the field had a powerful barrier set up by the tournament authorities, such a plan was possible. And in this way, the majority of the field in our territory that hadn’t been explored would be blown away, so any [objects] that we hadn’t found would naturally be destroyed by me. After ∞ Blaster ended, we would close in on the remaining quarter of the field that we had not yet explored (the quarter of our opponent’s territory that had not been hit by my bombardment), thereby moving into the final phase. It truly was a bold and ambitious strategy! Although it was an approach that fully utilised our power…the idea seemed so perfect that even Xenovia seemed slightly perplexed. Ravel revealed a calm smile.

“Simple petty tactics are completely useless in the face of true power; we shall burn this terror into the eyes of the contestants of the tournament, as well as all those who are watching it. There are a few competing teams in this tournament who are able to cause destruction to such a degree, but this is decisive power that even the lower level of god-class beings will not be able to overcome with strategy. This is what we need to demonstrate once more.”

And then, Ravel said this to me in a very simple manner.

“I will use tactics different to Rias-sama and Sona-sama with this team to show everyone.”

Upon seeing this haughty declaration from Ravel, I couldn’t help recalling what her okaa-san had told me.

—Ravel’s true nature is the path of supremacy.

……Using all of our power and knowledge on the path towards supremacy huh. This is Ravel’s talent…. If Riser was able to make use of Ravel’s talent — perhaps that Rating Game might have resulted in a one-sided loss for us. …… Unshakable determination and a spectacular way of executing it. All of it was so that people could acutely realise it. —Ravel was the cornerstone of this team. In order to continue surviving in this tournament, Ravel’s strength was indispensable. And at the same time, because she was the heart of this team, our chances of victory would immediately collapse if she were to be attacked. …Throughout this game, there may be people who become aware that Ravel is the core of our team. And so, as the tournament progresses, there will be more people aiming for Ravel than me. … Through this tournament, the slumbering talents that people of various factions possess will be discovered. Is this one of aspects that the managers — Beelzebub-sama and the God of Destruction Shiva are expecting? Or was this an earlier plan of Azazel-sensei and Sirzechs-sama? If that’s the case, then perhaps Ravel is the first person to fit this category. This reliable and promising strategic advisor-sama sent another message.

“The number of [objects] that our side has destroyed puts us into a check position. We just need one more to win. This is something that the other side also knows. They will no

longer hesitate, and will probably begin to attack while looking for [objects] or seek to snatch it from us. Now is the crucial moment where everything matters, everyone!”

Alright! In that case, Barakiel-san will have no choice but to appear!

I asked Ravel

“Ravel, where is Barakiel-san right now? Is he still fighting against Xenovia and Irina?”

“—Hmm, so you want to decide the victor of the game? I understand, since you want to determine a winner, please proceed.”

Ravel accepted my suggestion! Since the game had already progressed to such a stage, it was perfectly feasible for me to act like this as a [King]. Although Armaros-san was caught up in the western side of our territory which was within the range of my Blaster, we did not hear an announcement about his retirement, and so I was somewhat worried, but my team members would deal with him.

“Ise-sama, acting as a [King] to take down another [King] will greatly boost morale, and the evaluations from everyone definitely will not be low! Please show them just what kind of man the [King] of Hyoudou Issei’s peerage is!

“No problem!”

As expected of my peerage! And my manager! I then flew towards the location where Xenovia and Irina were fighting against Barakiel-san! They were in the north-eastern corner! I focused my strength into my dragon wings, and flew towards there at high-speed! Although Pseudo-Dragon

Deification had used up the majority of my stamina, I could still continue to fight!

“Hold on!”

“We’ve found Hyoudou Issei!”

On the way, several of Barakiel-san’s team members attempted to stop my progression—.

“Don’t get in the way of my lord!”

The one who crashed into the Fallen Angels from their flank was my [Pawn], Bova! Bova spat out a powerful torrent of flames which did not lose to his chichi’s in intensity, and then stood in front of the Fallen Angels to block them off! Bova fearlessly said

“[King]! Leave this to me!”

“Alright, I’m counting on you!”

I left that to Bova, and then flew towards Barakiel-san’s location without any hesitation! Although I was panting heavily with ‘Haa haa…’ noises…I could not stop here to rest!

[Of the [Lightning] team, one [Pawn] has retired.]

Yeah! An update from our side! It seems like Bova has already taken care of an opponent! As I flew at high-speed over the field, I was soon able to see thunderclouds! That’s where Xenovia and Irina were fighting! Xenovia and Irina were up against Barakiel-san and two other Fallen Angels in a two-to-three fight. One of the two Fallen Angels was a woman who used a greatsword forged of light, while the

other one was a male Fallen Angel who wielded a halberd of light.

“Ise! You came!”

“Sure enough, my darling was thinking of having a showdown between the leaders!”

Both Xenovia and Irina welcomed my arrival. Speaking of which, even if it was the two of them up against Barakiel-san’s lightning, they had done very well! Although their uniform had already become tattered, and they were low on stamina, both of them were still fine and lively, and evaded a direct strike from the lightning.

“I’ll leave the other two to you two!”

I left the two other Fallen Angel opponents to Xenovia and Irina, while I flew directly towards Barakiel-san!

“Barakiel-san! Let’s finish off what we started!”

I changed my right arm into its Solid Impact mode whilst I evaded Barakiel-san’s lightning—.

[Boost Boost Boost Boost Boost Boost Boost Boost Boost Boost Boost Boost!!!!!!]

[Solid Impact Booster!!!!]

I quickly sent Barakiel-san flying through the air! Barakiel-san’s beaten body was languid, but he steadied himself and prepared for a direct confrontation.

“Very well. But, do not be careless. Are you able to understand what I’m thinking?”

From here, it was a melee fight between [Kings]! My punches and kicks all hammered down upon Barakiel-san's face, shoulders, torso, and legs! On the other hand, Barakiel-san's lightning-imbued punches and kicks also struck my face, torso, and my legs! His attacks of lightning, a combination of electricity and light, were transmitted to me through my armour, and because my reserves of stamina and demonic energy were low, I couldn't stop myself from trembling due to the damage that was done to my entire body! And amidst the heated exchange with Barakiel-san, I deeply felt it.

—Barakiel-san had pulled the rug out from underneath me when it came to strategy. It was as if he was trying to guide me. It was as if this person was acting in the place of Azazel-sensei. Even his words just then were the same. He deliberately said "Are you able to understand what I'm thinking?" in order to guide my thought process. …He was encouraging my growth through this Rating Game. A year ago — I died once because of a Fallen Angel. And in the year following that — I've grown to this point by the hand of a Fallen Angel. And precisely because of that, I know that I have to repay that debt now! I have to respond to their expectations! Barakiel-san, I will defeat you! But before that, I have to repay you for what you just did! I faced Barakiel-san directly and said

"I…at night, I occasionally sleep together with Akeno-san! Being caught between Rias and Akeno-san while I sleep is the best!"

Instantly, Barakiel-san seemed taken aback by what I had just said! At first he was embarrassed, and confused, and then he became mad!

"……. …Kuh! Y-You're using that trick!"

My attack accurately struck Barakiel-san as he let his guard down! However, my breathing had already become heavy and disturbed! My stamina had almost reached its limits as well! But I didn’t care about that and continued to speak!

“Also, for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, Akeno-san often cooks for me! Akeno-san also makes bentos[7] for me!”

By combining my attacks with these verbal outbursts, Barakiel-san was gradually falling into a downward spiral! His intense tremors were the best evidence of that! But, I needed to properly convey how I felt about Akeno-san to him!

“Akeno-san has always acted as the elder who stands before us as a leader, she is in fact together with girls of a similar age to herself, but she can be hurt by the little things, and I know how delicate she is! Akeno-san worries about all of us; regardless of whether I or someone else is injured, she keeps the pain inside her heart, that’s something I’m also very clear on!”

Akeno-san is actually nothing more than an ordinary girl! Although she usually acts like an onee-san at school, I know that she also has the side of an ordinary girl because we’ve been living under the same roof together!

“To me, not only is she a caring onee-san, she’s also a cute girl, as well as a woman who can reveal a beautiful smile. I’m absolutely certain of these things!”

But in response, Barakiel-san widened his eyes, his expression became even more imposing, and he sent me flying through the air again! Barakiel-san shouted out whilst sparks of lightning erupted from his entire body!

“Even if you say that! Even if you understand Akeno! You — still chose Rias Gremory didn’t you!?”

“—What!”

When Barakiel-san said that one sentence…my body froze. Barakiel-san charged at me with a flying kick and continued

“You chose Rias Gremory! Everyone also understood that, and agreed with it! I also heard about your promise of the future with her! You will be together with Rias Gremory from now on! Well…well! What about Akeno!? Akeno…who will be together with her!? My daughter’s heart is attracted to you, and yet you’ve been taken away by Rias Gremory, so what will my daughter do from now on!?”

Speechless, I could only allow myself to be beaten by Barakiel-san unilaterally. His eyes — shed tears.

“Akeno…she will never put the blame on Rias Gremory nor you! To Akeno, both of you are important people! From the bottom of her heart, she sincerely wishes for the happiness of you two! But where is Akeno’s happiness!? Who else can ensure the happiness of my daughter!? Akeno’s future…will only be marred with sadness! Since that’s the case…”

Barakiel-san grabbed my neck — and wept.

“…I should have split you and Akeno apart from the very beginning. As long as she likes someone else, Akeno will also become happy, right? You…will you tell Akeno this? Or do you have other ways to make Akeno happy…? I am her father. …My daughter, Akeno, she is in love with you. So, tell me your answer! The Hyoudou Issei whom my daughter loves! How will you treat my daughter!?”

Barakiel-san’s tears and a penetrating punch struck my face squarely. My helmet was shattered, exposing my face underneath it. …Barakiel-san had also cried during the graduation ceremony. I think as he watched the graduation ceremony, he must have been recalling the past, and also casting his eyes towards Akeno-san’s future. And because of that, he was worried about Akeno-san. The cry of Barakiel-san’s soul was carried forth in that punch, and rang through to my mind and body. …Akeno-san’s happiness. In love with me…. I had already sworn on my future with Rias, so for Akeno-san…what about her? Could it be as Barakiel-san said, would it be better if Akeno-san liked someone else…?

…….

…Memories of the time spent together with Akeno-san gradually surfaced within my mind.

—…How do you feel, Ise-kun, after hearing that? You hate Fallen Angels, right? They killed you and Asia-chan once, and tried to destroy this city once, there’s no way you can hold good thoughts about them.

The first time that Akeno-san told me the truth about herself in front of me, she was prepared to accept that I would hate her, and still she said all of that. But, I — simply could not find a reason to hate Akeno-san.

—Not only that, I have the blood of a fallen angel in me, you know? Can you forgive me? Although I reincarnated into a Devil, the fact that I have the blood of a Fallen Angel in me doesn’t change. …I may have approached you wanting to get hated, you know? No, that’s definitely the case. I…am the worst kind of woman….

No, Akeno-san…you’re the best woman! Not only are you gentle, you’re also more delicate than anyone else—.

—Kaa-sama…! I…! I wanted to see tou-sama more often! I wanted tou-sama to pat my head more! I wanted to play much more with tou-sama! Tou-sama… tou-sama and kaa-sama…I wanted to live together more with the three of us…!

She was lonelier than anyone else, and sought love more than anyone else.

—Ufufu, that would make it my first French kiss, I guess.

She really surprised me. But, Akeno-san’s first kiss was with me, and that really made me feel proud.

—She’s right, if it’s the same fallen-angel then I will be able to make Ise-kun happy. That’s why please have more confidence. If you don’t take another step with Rias, then I can’t—

When I was frightened by the shadow of Raynare, and didn’t dare to even think of going further with Rias, you said those things to motivate me. Now, being able to enjoy the happiness I have with Rias is also thanks to your encouragement back then, Akeno-san—.

—…Yeah. Yeah, I’m okay now. I will live on for the sake of you, Rias, and everyone else. I will become stronger with you, Ise. I will be with you forever.

I also cherished Akeno-san, I definitely wouldn’t die again, because I had to keep living with her—.

—Ise, I love you. Ufufu.

I also—.

……Have Akeno-san like someone else? Separate her…from me…? Akeno-san…and a man other than myself….

……

…Something like that, how could I possibly forgive it! Neither will I allow something like that to happen! Akeno-san and I…our hearts are linked! I like all of Akeno-san! Akeno-san has always been watching me! She belongs only to me — Himejima Akeno! —Letting some other bastard take her away is something I cannot forgive! Akeno-san's sleek black hair, her smile, her gentleness, her S side, her personality which makes her easily saddened, her lips, her well-endowed oppai, everything, all of her — I want to make it mine!

—I decided.

I decided! I steeled my determination! Azazel-sensei, I am the Hyoudou Issei who is determined to become a harem king! So, no matter how many people it is, as long as it's me…whether they pursue me or if it's a woman that I pursue — I will make them happy! Whether it's Rias, Asia, or Akeno-san — I will definitely make them happy! That's right! Hyoudou Issei! You must say it! You have to say it! I need to make sure that the media of the Underworld, and even all of the factions hear it! I cried out with a voice that reverberated across the entire field!

"Then, I — love Akeno-san!"

And I went on!

"Barakiel-san, please allow me to take responsibility…I will be responsible! I will not give her to anyone else! I will…take Akeno-san! I will treasure Himejima Akeno for the rest of my life! Just as I have made Rias happy, I will also make Akeno happy! My dream is to become a harem king! The women who like me, and the women who love me, I will make all of them happy without leaving anyone out!"

“—WHAT!!”

Barakiel-san was shocked! This was the confession from my heart! Yes, I will take responsibility! Barakiel-san! Please accept my thoughts!

“I promise to make her happy! —I will take care of Himejima Akeno for as long as I live! Akeno is mine! Akeno, I LOOOOOOVVEEE YOOUUU!”

I faced the speechless Barakiel-san directly!

[Boost Boost Boost

finally understood, and finally noticed, my feelings for you. Hearing my confession — the cry of my soul, Barakiel-san shed tears at the same time as he was knocked down.

“……Ah, how could this be…! How could I be crying at a time like this…! Azazel, he has finally set his path — he has personally said that he wants to go down the path of a harem king…!”

Due to my powerful strike, although Barakiel-san was able to stand, he was trembling non-stop. On the other side, Xenovia’s Durandal and Excalibur released an exceedingly powerful holy aura, which cut down the wielder of the greatsword of light.

[Of the [Lightning] team, one [Knight] has retired.]

The broadcast announced Xenovia’s victory. It looks like her opponent was also a [Knight].

“…Using destructive power is not only the privilege of my [King]. But, that was a really good confession, Ise!”

That’s right, my [Knight], Xenovia! Irina was also easily avoiding the fierce onslaught of the halberd from the Fallen Angel in mid-air. The halberd’s shockwaves caused the air to vibrate tremendously, and it also dug out trails on the ground. On the other hand, Irina used Hauteclere to perform a series of high-speed slashes. Her opponent was unable to counter it. Irina-san then extended a long whip of light from her left hand and cleverly wrapped it around her opponent’s foot. By pulling on the whip, her opponent’s stance was broken. This was the special offensive light energy technique that only Irina was able use, though some inspiration was taken from [Excalibur Mimic]. Her opponent was forced to his knees, and he was instantly cut down by

the enormous amount of aura that Irina released from Hauteclere.

“Amen!”

“Guaaaaaaahh!”

After suffering from that attack from the holy aura of Hauteclere, her opponent was finally enshrouded in the light of retirement.

[Of the [Lightning] team, one [Pawn] has retired.]

“Fufu, in fact, I can also use some fancy attacks! It’s all because of darling’s confession that I became so excited all of a sudden!”

Irina had also dealt with her opponent! In that case, I should also finish off my final task as [King]! Well, Barakiel-san! Please accept this final blow! Cannons emerged out from my dragon wings, and then pointed forwards! A red aura gathered at the muzzle of the cannons!

“These are! My true feelings, towards you, and towards Akeno-san!”

[Boost Boost Boost

An overwhelming and bright red aura was expelled from my two cannons, and beamed towards Barakiel-san—. Enduring the red aura, Barakiel-san seemed to have a relieved look.

“…Shuri, our daughter…has found a good man.”

Leaving behind only these words, the [King] of the [Lightning] team, Barakiel-san was enshrouded in the light of retirement—.

[—Of the [Lightning] team, the [King] has retired. The [Sekiryuutei of Blazing Truth] team are victorious!]

After that, the announcement that the game was over arrived—.

After this game, the opinions of the critics changed. The voices pointing out that we were not familiar with strategy, and that our experience of the games was shallow did not change, but this was added on to the end of all that.

—To the majority of teams, they are a simple and straightforward terror.

[1] –shi is a formal honorific used when the speaker is unfamiliar with the person that they are referring to.

[2] Kanji was Holy Grail of the Secluded World.

[3] Kanji was Chief Mourner’s Crucified Stand of Purple Flame.

[4] This is a reference to the short story entitled Woship ☆ Dragon-God-Girl from DX.2.

[5] –kyo is an honorific similar to Sir. In this case, it would be something along the lines of Sir Gremory.

[6] –senshu is an honorific used to refer to a player or contestant.

[7] Bento: Homemade lunchbox. Often meticulously detailed as a sign of love and care.

New Life

Part 1

A few days after defeating Barakiel-san’s team—.

A slight change had occurred at the dining table of the Hyoudou household.

“Here, ah— ♪”

Sitting beside me (on my right), Akeno-san used chopsticks to feed me tamagoyaki [1] in the “Ah—” manner. After the match against Barakiel-san concluded, Akeno-san has constantly been sticking to my side. I ate the tamagoyaki that was fed to me. Mmm~ it was juicy, sweet, and truly delicious!

“Is it delicious? A-na-ta [2] ♪”

Akeno-san asked. When she said it like that, it almost sounded as if she was my wife! No, but I did say that I would make Akeno-san happy, regardless of whether it was the present or the future. And sitting on my other side (on my left), Rias finally exploded the very instant that she saw this.

“You actually said a-na-ta, Akeno! I-It’s too early for that!”

Akeno-san smiled softly.

“Ara? I have a promise with Ise for our future. So isn’t it only natural for me to address him like this? Rias, Ise made the same promise to you on the day of the graduation ceremony. Can’t you also call him that?”

Rias puffed out her cheeks and immediately retorted

“E-Even so, it’s too soon! F-First, we have to hold a proper engagement ceremony—”

“A deep relationship is already enough ♪ Ufufu, I already feel so happy that I don’t even know what to do.”

At this point, Akeno-san almost seemed to dance on the spot, and became rather cheerful. And then, Akeno-san issued a very erotic challenge to Rias.

“Rias, allow me to declare this. In the future, I will have Ise’s child before you. No, I definitely will. This I can say with confidence. Ufufu.”

M-My child! What are you saying, Akeno-san! I don’t even know how to react to this! Tears began to well up in Rias’ eyes as she said

“That’s something I can also vow for the future!”

She was pouting angrily, but she was also very cute at the same time. After watching this from the side, Xenovia, Asia and Irina also said

“Listen up, Asia, Irina! We must also get closer to Ise to make him take responsibility for us too!”

“I don’t quite understand, but I won’t lose to my onee-samas!”

“In other words, we can no longer simply watch from the side!”

Kunou looked at this situation with a serious expression and said

“Mmm! So this is how fierce the competition is in this household!”

Koneko-chan, Rossweisse-san and Ravel all sighed, and they earnestly said to Kunou

“…Welcome to the girls’ club of hell that is competing for Ise-senpai.”

“Hell is a strange interpretation. But when things get intense, the relationships of each member can change greatly even in half a day.”

“Kunou-san, it’s going to be difficult here, ok? First of all, let me tell you about the ranking and rules—”

…Early in the morning, I was already surrounded by the enthusiasm of the girls in my house. I guess, in order to become a harem king, I’ll need to get accustomed to these kinds of things. The Kiba group (Kiba, Gasper, Tosca, Valerie) who had been invited over for breakfast also remained on the sidelines as bystanders and they simply said

[It looks like it’s quite difficult.]

Kiba made a wry smile while he said to me

“It must be tough, Ise-kun.”

“…I suppose. I don’t even know what to do now.”

Then, Kiba changed the topic and asked me

“That reminds me, after the game concluded, it seems you were summoned by the Maou-sama, what happened?”

“Ah, just a small matter.”

Just as Kiba said, after the game with Barakiel-san, I alone was summoned by Beelzebub-sama. I went to Beelzebub-sams's personal research facility in the Maou's territory, and then Beelzebub-sama said to me

[Hyoudou Issei-kun, just one moment will be fine. I summoned you because there is something that I need to speak to you about.]

Saying that, Beelzebub-sama used a large screen to display an image. I couldn't have imagined that it was actually—.

[Yo, Ise. Is it spring on your side now? The battle over here is in full swing.]

W-W-W-W-W-W-W-W-W-W-W-W-W-WHAT IS THIS! The person shown there was Azazel-sensei! Moreover, it wasn't a recording, it was a true, live broadcast!

[Azazel-sensei!? What is going on here!?]

I was so excited that I grabbed the screen as I shouted! I was so shocked that I pinched my own cheeks to verify that it wasn't a dream. Sensei threw a spear of light out towards somewhere while he continued

[It's nothing surprising, this is simply a form of communication between the isolation barrier.]

[S-Something like this is actually possible!?]

I thought that as soon as they went in there that I would never be able to see nor speak to them again, so this information really shocked me! Sensei said

[Of course. We can contact each other regularly; if we couldn't communicate about the situation of the battle over

here, I wouldn’t be able to speak to you either, right? Also, if supplies aren’t sent over to us, we won’t be able to fight a protracted battle.]

Thinking carefully about it, it made sense…. Sensei went into the barrier because he had made these kinds of preparations. I just didn’t expect that the isolation barrier was so well prepared for. Beelzebub-sama continued to explain to me

[The only things that cannot exit from the inside are Sirzechs and the others, as well as Trihexa. The exchange of information and transfer of goods are all possible. This matter is currently confidential, and only a few people are aware of it.]

I-I see! So it was actually possible for them to receive information. Speaking of which, was it really alright to tell me such a secret…. Azazel-sensei dodged a certain object and continued

[Using the information on Trihexa that we have obtained, it’s possible that you guys might be able to develop relevant countermeasures, or approaches, right? If that’s possible, perhaps this can be over in less than ten thousand years.]

Information was constantly being updated from the inside and outside, and that could be used to shorten the battle against Trihexa. In that way, it might truly take less than ten thousand years.

[Ah! What! Who are you talking with? Could it possibly be Sona-tan!?]

I heard a very familiar, cheery voice! Serafall Leviathan-sama appeared on the display! This person doesn’t appear to have changed very much either…. Sensei said

[No, it’s Ise. It looks like things over there have settled down a bit, so that’s why we can get in touch with you.]

Serafall-sama seemed to cry after she heard that.

[Uuh, I really want to talk to Sona-tan soon! I! I’m going to collapse because of my Sona-tan deficiency!]

…I’m sorry, Sona-senpai isn’t here…. Indeed, because the former kaichou graduated, I’ve decided to change the way I address her to ‘senpai’.

[Fufufu, Serafall. Sona can’t find out about the way we communicate. Didn’t we all decide that only Ise-kun alone would know about this right now?]

And then came a nostalgic voice that I had missed — it was Sirzechs-sama! Though, he was currently in his destruction form, rather than his usual red-haired appearance.

[Sirzechs-sama!?]

[Hey, Ise-kun. Have you been well? You collapsed when we parted, so I was worried about you.]

[I-I’m doing well! Perfectly healthy!]

Ah, being able to see Sirzechs-sama caused me to burst into tears! Being able to see sensei, Leviathan-sama, and Sirzechs-sama as well right now, I’m already…!

[I-I…. I thought that I would never see you all again in my lifetime and that I wouldn’t be able to speak to you again…!]

Seeing my manly tears, sensei seemed uneasy.

[Ah — don’t cry now, don’t cry. Although we may not be able to see each other face to face, we can at least talk to each

other occasionally like this.]

Really!? That was truly good to hear. …Yes, but it seems like I’m the only one to know about this secret, which makes it somewhat difficult knowing that I have to keep this from everyone else while I’m the only one who can see them.… Just as I began to enter into such thoughts, Beelzebub-sama changed the topic.

[Former Governor Azazel, Sirzechs, let us speak about the earlier topic.]

[Hmm, having to fight while talking is just a bit difficult, so I’ll make it brief.]

Sirzechs-sama nodded, and Azazel-sensei began to explain

[Ise, before we headed in here, there was a discussion between the VIPs of the Three Factions. Accurately speaking, it was before you rushed off to Agreas to save your parents that this matter was already decided on.]

Beelzebub-sama said to me

[I will be establishing a secret intelligence bureau. Using an example from the human world, it would be similar to the American CIA, or the English MI6.]

—A secret intelligence bureau! It sounds like the establishment of an incredible organisation! I thought it had nothing to do with me until Sirzechs-sama said

[—I hope that you can join it as an intelligence officer. From here on, there will be more and more people who act in order to take control of the world. It is necessary to protect the future, so it is necessary to remove evil while it is still being immature, which is why I hope that you’ll be able to join.]

—What! Is this for real!? I’m going to become an intelligence officer of this secret intelligence bureau!?

[…I-I’m going to be an intelligence officer!? I may have defeated villains several times, but…]

Azazel-sensei said to me with a serious tone

[This is a request not only from Sirzechs, but also from me.]

Beelzebub-sama also nodded.

[In the future, there will be more and more cases that will need to be dealt with secretly. That’s why an organisation like this is necessary.]

Sirzechs-sama continued

[—We plan to name the organisation [EXE] [3].]

[…[EXE]…[ExE] huh.]

…From [DxD] to [EXE]—. Beelzebub-sama said

[You originally belonged to the anti-terrorist team [DxD], and you also possess the flesh of [DxD] Great Red [4], and at the same time you are also called [DxD] [5]. The next one after ‘D’ — is ‘E’, which is in the title of the organisation [EXE] that you will belong to. Don’t you think that this is a fateful choice?]

…The next initial after the ‘D’ in my name of [DxD] [5] is ‘E’ — and I will join [EXE]. Beelzebub-sama said

[…The organisation’s establishment is planned for two to three years in the future. For now, we need to focus on post-war rehabilitation and the management of the international tournament.]

Sirzechs-sama said something that was even more shocking.

[I hope that you will be able to stand at the centre of the organisation in the future.]

[Centre!?]

You want me to be the leader!? No no, it’s hard enough as it is just being a [King], no matter how you look at it, I’m not fit to act as the leader of a new organisation! I don’t have the capacity or the ability for that!

[It’s impossible! Someone like me…]

Just as I was thinking about refusing outright, Beelzebub-sama began to evaluate me.

[Sirzechs possesses transcendent power, and Former Governor Azazel possesses a vast network of relations; if someone could be the combination of both of them, it would be you.]

Sensei then said

[To put it even simpler, in order to face the crises that will arise in the future, I hope that you can make preparations for them in my stead.]

[Preparations?]

Sensei then said

[—I hope that you can support the world from the shadows like Vali, and seek out the existences with transcendent power. At the very least, you must bring all of the Longinus users to our side.]

[H-How could I possibly take charge of such an important role! I ignore politics, and I don’t even understand my own judgement of good and evil either!]

I simply can’t become a politician like Sirzechs-sama or Azazel-sensei. If it involves politics, and if I had to consider aspects such as whether my actions on the world were good or evil, I think my head would crack! Azazel-sensei continued

[I’m not telling you to do it now. You won’t do it on your own either. —From now on, you will learn together with your team, and you will have their support in the future. As a result, you will be the driving force behind [EXE].]

Sirzechs-sama then continued

[You are young. There are plenty of things that you want to do. There are also many ambitions that you wish to achieve. However, the approaching threats are also a fact of reality. … Ise-kun, among the many dreams that you hold, could you also add the protection of the world in with those as well?]

At that time, I couldn’t come up with a good answer. The best that I could do was to say

[I will think about it.]

After all, this wasn’t the kind of question that I could easily reply to. Sensei and the others said that they would give me time to consider before the establishment of the organisation…. I…need to become a transcending being like Sirzechs-sama, and someone like Azazel-sensei who has a vast and resourceful network…?

…….

I can’t do it right now. My strength and ability are both lacking. But—. I still have around ten thousand years of my life to go. Since that’s the case, if I work on those things bit by bit starting from now…in the future, I’ll be able to…. While those thoughts clouded my mind, the contest of the girls beside me intensified even further.

“Geez! Akeno, I will not forgive you if you take my boyfriend’s ‘first’!”

“Well, then I’ll dedicate all sorts of ‘firsts’ to my lover Ise.”

“If that’s the case, then I’ll make sure that I enjoy my ‘firsts’ much more!”

Rias and Akeno-san turned around and asked me at the same time.

““Ise, which do you think is better!?””

…….

…Even if it’s my turn to answer, I’m troubled on what to say….

“W-Well, both.”

—Even though I courageously answered like that

““Who starts first!?””

—Being asked that, I was immediately dumbfounded! Standing on the side, tou-san and kaa-san smiled as they watch us—.

“Kaa-san, this is youth isn’t it?”

“It is youth indeed, isn’t it?”

They seemed to be enjoying it. And then, at the end of our conversation, Azazel-sensei said

[Ise, have you become a high-class Devil?]

[Yes, all thanks to your care. …But, there are still some times when I feel inexperienced…]

Despite my restless mood, sensei gave me a thumbs up and smiled as he said

[—If breasts appear before your eyes, don’t think about anything else. You have embarked on the journey to becoming a harem king. Difficult matters are difficult matters, and breasts are breasts. Don’t mix them together, think about them separately. That’s what I think is an ‘Oppai Dragon’.]

Difficult matters are difficult matters, and breasts are breasts. Don’t mix them together, think about them separately. …Perhaps in my subconscious, I never separated the difficult issues from breasts! Beside sensei, after hearing what he had to say, Sirzechs-sama also said with a bold tone

[That’s right. That may well be the case. —Ise-kun, I’m not distracted either when I grope Grayfia’s breasts. That’s how simple the situation is.]

Even Sirzechs-sama (destruction form) said such a thing! … Even the great Maou-sama also considers politics to be separate from breasts! There is no doubt about it now! At the very end of the conversation, Azazel-sensei shouted

[Ise! Dreams, love, fights, oppai, all of this is a part of youth! Grope breasts when you’re feeling troubled! At the end of that, you will have become a harem king! I believe in you! Do your best!]

Alright! Sensei! I will carry my dreams and ambitions, and as I struggle through them, I will grope breasts! I will aim to become a harem king! That’s right, my youth is just getting started right now—.

Part 2

The evening two days after that—.

The new and old Occult Research Club members were gathered in the living room. Everyone was watching the television intently. The television was showing a special program from the Underworld on the international tournament. The cameras of the operations committee and the various factions were all gathered at the spacious venue. Today, the next part of the tournament schedule was to be announced. My team had already registered yesterday. It seems like the schedule for all of the teams that had registered by yesterday would be announced tonight, all at once. Because we held our strategy meeting during the previous announcement, we didn’t get to see the live broadcast, but we were going to pay attention to it this time.

Various combinations appeared upon the screen. With ‘VS’ in the middle, the teams on the left and right side of it were decided by random, and the combinations would then be determined. Numerous team names were displayed quite quickly. There were more than I had expected. Each combination was announced one after the other. Because these were the combinations for the next battles, our next game and the one after that would be published…so far, there were no famous opponents. But, we couldn’t be careless! We can’t possibly predict what will unfold

according to different sets of rules. There is also the issue of compatibility between teams. Every game was an experience that had something to be learned from. The game combinations continued to be displayed. All of a sudden, two combinations caught everyone’s attention. The cameras also homed in on these two. The host in the venue announced these two unexpected team combinations in a loud voice

[How unexpected! Such a combination has actually appeared at this stage! It looks like these games will be ones that every team in the competition will be paying attention to!]

I could not help but hold my breath as I saw the two combinations, and I could not suppress the impulse welling up inside my body either.

“—Kuh. …So it’s come…”

The television display was divided top and bottom, showing both combinations at the same time.

[Imperial Purpure][6] Sairaorg Bael (Underworld Devil) team VS [Spear of the Heavenly Emperor] Cao Cao (Mount Meru) team

[Sekiryuutei of Blazing Truth] Hyoudou Issei (Underworld Devil) team VS [Trump Card of Heaven] Dulio Gesualdo (Heaven) team

As soon as these combinations were announced, thunderous cheers erupted from the audience at the venue. Given that they had seen something like this, it was only natural!

—A battle between Sairaorg, the embodiment of power and Cao Cao, the genius of technique!

—As for myself…I would be fighting against Dulio, the trump card of Heaven!

This was the International Rating Game Tournament…! This was a festival of dreamlike battles that I was participating in…! Ravel also stood up out of surprise.

“—It actually appeared so early; the teams of the most popular young Devils are competing with the representative teams of Heaven and Mount Meru…!”

Rias couldn’t restrain her own excitement either and said whilst trembling

“…It is quite irresistible. Even though I’m not there in person, I can’t help but tremble in excitement after seeing these combinations!”

…Yeah, what Rias said is true. Such a combination has already been made in the preliminary round! I desperately held back the excitement that was rising up within me. —However, tonight’s surprises were not over yet. Kaa-san walked over from the entrance and said

“Ise, there’s someone who wants to see you?”

The person led into the living room by kaa-san had a slim figure and their face was obscured by a hood. The guest took off their hood and exposed their face. The person who had appeared was a vampire that I had met before—.

“—Elmenhilde!”

I exclaimed in surprise as I stood up. Elmenhilde bowed, and then greeted us.

“Good evening, everyone. I saw the game. So there is one thing that I’d like to request.”

After saying that, she approached me whilst her red pupils remained locked onto me. Elmenhilde unwaveringly asked me

“—Hyoudou Issei-sama, could you please include me in your team?”

Her words were so astounding that I momentarily forgot about the tournament matchup. —Indeed, the greatest festival of my high school life has just begun.

[1] Tamagoyaki: A Japanese omelette, made by rolling together several layers of cooked egg.

[2] This is commonly used by women to address their husband or lover, and would be similar to ‘dear’ or ‘darling’ in English.

[3] Pronounced as Eguze, like a Windows executable program. When ExE is shown (lowercase x), it is pronounced as Eee Eee.

[4] DxD: Dragon of Dragon.

[5] DxD: Diabolos Dragon.

[6] Kanji reads as Purple Gold Lion King.

Afterword

It’s been a long time since volume twenty one was published. It’s Ishibumi Ichiei here. Fans may have thought that after volume twenty one and DX3, the story would soon progress into the final arc, and this is indeed the case for volume twenty two. The final arc will have a very lively style, similar to how it was in the first three arcs. The fourth arc was the beginning of the events involving the Three Factions, exposing the Underworld and the darkness of the Rating Games, so in comparison to the first three arcs which were brighter, the plot was somewhat more serious. Having said that, part of the reasoning behind Ise’s promotion to a High-class Devil is because the respective problems that were brought up in the early stages of the story with the upper echelons of the Devils and the Three Factions had to be dealt with first. The final arc will use a similarly bright tone to deal with the heroines, and I feel that everything that has been saved up so far should be pierced through at once. The final arc (possibly) won’t reach volume thirty. — But there should be DX volumes in between, so I would be honoured if you can accompany me to the end. In summary, the final arc has finally begun. After the backbone of this story, Ise, rose to fame, all of the characters who have been introduced thus far are now participating in the International Rating Game, which has become the final open stage full of festivals. Following below are various individual topics.

Ise’s promotion!

Finally! Ise has become a High-class Devil, and now stands on the starting line for his journey towards becoming a Harem King. Thinking back, this was the ambition that he held in the first volume, and it has finally progressed after

twenty volumes. I’m sure many readers also feel deeply emotional about this. I was also burning up as I wrote the about the promotion ceremony. After the promotion, he immediately promised his future with Rias and Akeno as well. With his aim to become a Harem King, he made a public declaration that would make everyone happy. The decision on his relationships with the heroines is also a theme of the fifth arc. Please continue to pay attention to Ise’s consciousness. Now, who will be the next to swear their future together with Ise, to become a member of his harem? Based on the present status quo, Ise’s peerage includes his [Rook] Rossweisse, [Bishops] Asia and Ravel, as well as [Knight] Xenovia. Irina, Bova, and Bina are not part of his peerage, though they are his comrades and team members. Several other members of Ise’s peerage are expected to appear in the final arc. The search for future peerage members is also one of the themes of this arc. However, the final arc probably won’t be able to show all of his peerage. The reason that Rias has been separated from the team is to emphasise the fact that Ise has become a High-class Devil. Taking into account the relevance of opponents, and the activity of the late heroines at the same time — especially Ravel and Rossweisse, whose roles in the fourth arc were rather inadequate, I chose to present them in such a way this time. The matches of Rias’ team will also be mentioned throughout, so please rest assured. They will take the form of a separate description. After reading the volume, you will probably think that Ravel has a very active role in the final arc. Just as everyone saw, it would have been impossible to win in the tournament without Ravel. Ravel will have an important role to play in this final arc, so please witness her growth together with Ise as his manager.

The mysterious new characters

This time, the mysterious new characters of both Ise's and Rias' teams have appeared. The [Queen] of Ise's team, Bina Lessthan and the [Knight] of Rias' team, Lint Selzan. As for exactly who they are, please confirm this in the next volume or later. In this case, please also take notice of the mysterious [Pawn] on Rias' team. I think it will be interesting to see how the vacancies in Ise's peerage will develop in the future.

The competing groups for the International Rating Game Tournament

The world tournament has begun! It's been a long time since I last wrote a Rating Game. It's been around five years since a proper Rating Game like Sairaorg's (I did write about the rematch with Raiser in the first DX volume, but that is separate). Five years…five years!? What actually happened!? If a fan first started reading in middle school, it's actually been so long that they might think "I'm going to graduate soon"! The Rating Games were obviously a major theme of this series, but they were put aside. What have I been doing these past five years…. I'm sorry, when I think about it, it's my fault. In summary, at the very end, the matchups that were announced were Ise versus Dulio, and Sairaorg versus Cao Cao. However, basically only Ise's (as well as Rias' and Vali's) matches will be written about. So aside from those matches, I will avoid making them too detailed unless it is a very important match. It is more or less impossible to write about every single match. But the editors would also like to see the match between Sairaorg and Cao Cao, so if possible, this match and some others may be published in Dragon Magazine. For the readers who are interested, please check out Dragon Magazine or the Fujimi Fantasia Bunko website. Perhaps some of the games will be finished in the DX volumes. The editor-in-charge would also like to see the matches aside from Ise's ones, so perhaps the

matches of the world tournament will be made up for in some unexpected form. (But please forgive me if it doesn't happen.) For comments or requests such as "I want to see this battle!", please be sure to mail the Fujimi Fantasia Bunko editorial department by all means if, as I would also be interested in writing other battles aside from Ise's one. Because it has been five years, I'm sure there are many wanted game matchups. But I will not write Ise's rematch against Sairaorg. For those two, I don't think I could write anything better than the tenth volume. So I apologise for that. Now, about the competition of the world tournament. There may be some contradictions or loopholes in the special rules for this and future matches, I will give priority to atmosphere and form, and then do my best to make it reasonable. Regarding the content of the games, not all of the matches that Ise faces will be smooth-sailing. After all, there are some powerful rivals participating, so it will not be a simple or easy journey.

Shiva, and the Heavenly Emperor, it's finally time for the gods!

In the previous afterwords…I have said that the last boss of the final arc may be Shiva. Just as I previously said, it will be closely related to Shiva. The Heavenly Emperor that has been mentioned in the background since the beginning of the third arc has finally appeared. Until now, there hasn't been a character where you might think "It feels like he's always so mighty", but that will become more active from now on. And all of the foreshadowed characters will also make an appearance. A challenge to the many Gods is also a theme of this arc. The Gods who have appeared around Ise have gradually been introducing themselves, and he has finally become an existence that the Gods take notice of, and as the author, I also feel deeply emotional about this.

This was not something I could have imagined at the time of the first volume.

Next are the acknowledgements. Miyama Zero-sama, I am grateful to you every time. While preparing volume twenty two, my editor-in-charge changed. I worked with the previous Editor H-shi for eight and a half years, through thick and thin for a long time. I take this occasion to thank you once again from the bottom of my heart. And for the newly appointed Editor T-sama, I look forward to working with you from now on. It is my first time working with an editor younger than myself, so I'm also a bit nervous. The upcoming twenty third volume includes Ise versus Dulio, a dream showdown. Various characters associated with the Church will also appear, and needless to say, the Church trio will have some great scenes. However, it's not just about the progression of the tournament, there are also people who are secretly watching Ise and the others…?

There is some foreshadowing here to say that resolving the enemies is also a part of the final arc, so please look forward to this while you wait. —I originally wanted to talk a bit more about the contents of volume twenty three, but according to the publishing schedule, the next one is DX3. It will include the dreamlike short story of Xenovia and Irina's first meeting [Cross Crisis]. I think this is a very valuable one, so if you're a fan of Xenovia and Irina, it's a must-see. Thank you for that as well. Ah, in future, there may be something planned in regards to the final arc, so please also check out Dragon Magazine to see what happens.